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CHALLENGING POLICY:
CONFRONTING THE MILITARY PROFESSIONAL'S DILEMMA

BY

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Abstract

This is a study about the dilemma of the senior military professional who is faced with a decision as to whether and how to challenge national policy. These military professionals find themselves in a precarious position, being pulled by both their loyalty to their branch of service and their military ethos. The traditional military ethos encourages the military professional to remain silent and honor the authority of the President of the United States as the civilian Commander in Chief. The loyalty to service pulls the service chief to honor that essential bond of trust between military superiors and subordinates that demands that orders, which can ultimately result in the loss of human life, are issued in the light of the best possible military considerations at the time.

By attempting to re-create the thought processes of three previous service chiefs who faced a decision to challenge national policy, this study establishes guidelines that will be useful both to future senior military professionals faced with the decision to challenge national policy and others trying to understand the actions of senior military leaders.

The primary conclusion of this study is that, ultimately, the decision made by a senior military professional to challenge national policy is a personal choice, framed by the officer's personal vision of the role of the military professional in the American system of government. Other significant factors weighing on an officer's decision to dissent are the significance of the issue, personal relationships with key players in the Defense Department, and loyalty to the services these officers lead. In the end, it should be accepted that there are no absolute guidelines to solve the dilemma of the senior military professional facing a decision to challenge national policy. However, the

dilemma is real for senior military professionals who must be prepared to resolve it; and this study sheds light on the operative considerations.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

*It is very pleasant to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I would recommend it to any young man going up the military ladder. Being the chief of the service, on the other hand, is a hell of a job. You really have to love the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps to put up with four years as chief of any one.*¹

—Maxwell D. Taylor

During a 1965 House Armed Services Committee hearing regarding two opposing military pay bills, a short but significant exchange took place between the chairman of the committee, Representative L. Mendel Rivers, and the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Harold K. Johnson. At issue was President Lyndon B. Johnson's position that "Congressional action in 1962, 1963, and 1964 placed military compensation at a level, in relation to civilian pay levels, sufficient to attract and retain adequate numbers and quality of personnel in the Armed Forces."²

In the opening remarks to the committee, General Johnson stated that "I am not yet persuaded that the major realignment of service pay made in 1963 raised service pay to a level that can compare with other government employees or a comparable segment of the civilian sector." Immediately noting the significance of General Johnson's statement, Representative Rivers interrupted to comment "I wonder how they let you get by with that?" What Representative Rivers sought to highlight was that General Johnson's statement was directly at odds with presidential policy regarding military pay raises. In

his continuing testimony, General Johnson provided a detailed set of facts, including eight visual charts, to support his position that the existing military pay structure was insufficient, challenging the previous statement of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. General Johnson was also challenging President Johnson's policy regarding military pay, the only chief to do so during these hearings.

For General Johnson, increasing military pay was key to the Army's ability to attract and retain military professionals. To accept Secretary McNamara's position would be contradictory to the situation that General Johnson knew existed in the Army. Civilian and military pay rates were not comparable, and decreasing retention rates were already influencing the Army's ability to maintain operational readiness. Stated General Johnson, "I didn't dispute the figures or the conclusions that were reached, I just came to different conclusions with the same data."³

General Johnson did not take his decision to challenge Secretary McNamara lightly, even consulting retired General Omar Bradley who had already publicly stated opposition to MacNamara's plan and advised General Johnson to "stay and fight your battle and continue to fight it to the best of your ability."⁴ Thus, in a late night revision of his previously prepared testimony, General Johnson meticulously developed a new statement at odds with President Johnson's position on military pay. While this decision to challenge the presidential policy could be viewed as a challenge to the constitutional tenet of civilian supremacy over the military, General Johnson was able to justify his course of action based on his conviction that increasing military pay was the best policy, given the Army's existing situation.

Yet, just over one month later, General Johnson acquiesced to President Johnson's decision not to mobilize the reserve forces to assist in generating Army forces for Vietnam. Years later, General Johnson would characterize President Johnson's decision as "the greatest single mistake that was made," as it divorced the American people from some sense of responsibility for the Vietnam War.⁵ Further, every single emergency plan was predicated on the use of the reserve forces, and "all of a sudden this assumption was wiped out."⁶ The subject of deciding whether and how to voice disagreement with national policy, illustrated by these two contrasting incidents in General Johnson's tenure as Army Chief of Staff, is the focus of this study.

At first, when considering the situation in which a military professional contests the policy decisions of the civilian leadership, it appears both inconsistent with the traditional ethos of the military profession and contrary to the American military's fundamental tenet of obedience to civilian supremacy. The traditional ethos of the American military professional is grounded in the military oath of office which is clear in demanding that military members support and defend the Constitution of the United States and obey the lawful orders of "those appointed over" them. This allegiance requires that service members accomplish the assigned mission while honoring the authority and the legitimacy of the orders given by the civilian Commander-in-Chief and his subordinates. In the absence of moral or legal reservations to these orders, the military professional must either comply with the order or ask to be relieved. To challenge the order appears to infringe on the authority of the civilian leaders in government to retain control of the military. Therefore, to avoid the appearance of challenging this civilian authority, the

military professional has evolved into an apolitical warrior, avoiding the arena of politics and appearance of posing a threat to the established government.

In reality, however, for members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) the situation is more complex. These officers who represent the corporate knowledge of the United States armed services, have a duty to use this knowledge to provide independent military counsel to the executive branch of government. When this advice goes unheeded, or presidential policy conflicts with the independent professional military judgement of a member of the JCS, a tension is created between the traditional military ethos of the professional officer and the loyalty to the military subordinates serving under the leadership of the chief. The traditional military ethos encourages the military professional to remain silent and honor the authority of the President of the United States as the civilian Commander-in-Chief. The loyalty to service pulls the service chief to honor that essential bond of trust between military superiors and subordinates that demands that orders, which can ultimately result in the loss of human life, are issued in the light of the best possible military considerations at the time. As one seasoned observer of political military affairs noted over forty years ago, "To put this dilemma in a nutshell...[A]t the top of the military hierarchy the highest of military virtues, loyalty to branch and profession, runs smack into the most heinous of military sins, insubordination."⁷ This dilemma is exacerbated by the Constitution of the United States.

While the Constitution provides for civilian supremacy over the military, it does nothing to establish civilian control. Although civilian control of the military is accepted as fact by the American military professional, it is really a product of the process of government.⁸ The separation of powers between the Congress and President,

fundamental to the American system of government drives members of the JCS into the political arena as Congress and the President debate the policy issues of the country and bargain for political solutions. Inevitably during these political battles, the advice of the military professional, available to the executive branch in the form of the service chiefs, is sought by the Congress.

If a service chief is in disagreement with the presidential policy, the situation becomes acute as the selected chief is forced to resolve this dilemma in public.

If the military chief accepts and defends the Presidential policies, he is subordinating his own professional judgement...and becoming the political defender of an administration policy. If the military chief expresses his professional opinions to Congress, he is publicly criticizing his Commander-in-Chief and furnishing useful ammunition to his political enemies.⁹

Therefore, a senior military professional honored with a tour of duty as a service chief is almost certain to face this dilemma simply by the nature of the position. To help resolve this dilemma, service chiefs must know how to manage the tension created when their professional military judgement differs with presidential policy. Does the military professional have an obligation to challenge policy inconsistent with professional military judgement or does civilian supremacy over the military provide the civilian leadership the “right to be wrong” and execute an unsound military policy which could threaten the branch of service or even the national security? Does it depend on Congress or the American public to watch over the policy process with a magical eye that can detect bad policy? Is it necessary for senior military officers to dissent? Napoleon would answer,

A Commander-in-Chief cannot take as an excuse for his mistakes in warfare an order given by his sovereign or minister...It follows that any Commander-in-Chief who undertakes to carry out a plan which he considers defective is at fault; he must put forward his reasons, insist on the plan being changed, and finally tender his resignation rather than be the instrument of his army's downfall.¹⁰

This study examines how three previous service chiefs, caught in the middle of this dilemma, evaluated their options for voicing disagreement with policy decisions. Specifically, it attempts to re-create the thought process that previous JCS members have used to evaluate their options for voicing disagreement with existing or proposed national policy and choosing a course of action to express that dissent. By reviewing the thought process used by previous individuals confronting this dilemma, key factors should be exposed that will indicate what was important to the individual in deciding upon a course of action to resolve this dilemma. From an analysis of each individual's thought process, it should be possible to synthesize guidelines that will be useful both to future senior military professionals faced with similar challenges and other officers, who desire to gain an appreciation for the dilemmas faced by their senior military leadership.

Methodology

A substantial number of cases exist in which senior officers have challenged national policy. For this study, two criteria were applied to identify individual officers suitable for examination. First, only officers who experienced the dilemma while serving as a service chief were considered. Although tensions between civilian and military leaders are often exposed in the duties of other senior military positions, such as Regional Commanders-in-Chief, members of the JCS are the only senior military leaders with a statutory obligation to insure impartial military advice is made available to the National Command Authority (NCA). Inside the JCS, it is the service chiefs who experience the brunt of the dilemma. They must balance their military advice on policy issues against their broader responsibility to "organize, train, and equip" the best force possible within their service. The Chairman or Vice Chairman of the JCS, as brokers of military advice, may exclude

the interests of an individual service for the collective interests of the armed forces. When this happens, the dilemma for the service chief is particularly acute, as it is possible that his best military advice for the civilian leadership may not even leave the halls of the Pentagon.

A more limiting selection criterion concerns how the service chief dealt with this dilemma. Ideally, a JCS member should offer military advice to the President, accept the President's decision as final, and execute the given order. Failing this, the service chief should request for relief from command. In reality, there exists a third option, voice dissent. For this study, three alternatives were reviewed. First, a service chief can adhere to the policy while, voicing disagreement to the policy only in the private venues of the executive branch of the government. Second, a service chief can adhere to the policy, yet voice his objection to the policy in the public forum in an attempt to change the policy by bringing Congressional or public pressure to bear on the policy makers. Finally, a service chief can resign or retire, thus removing himself from the situation that created the dilemma.

In order to provide this study evidence concerning each of the three alternatives, one service chief was selected for each option listed above. They are General Matthew B. Ridgway, USA; General Harold K. Johnson, USA; and General Ronald R. Fogleman, USAF. As Chief of Staff of the Army from 1953-1955, General Ridgway's views regarding the role of the Army in providing for the national security of the United States collided with President Eisenhower's "New Look" strategy and its resulting effect on the Army. To voice his dissent, General Ridgway, while continuing to serve as Chief of Staff, entered the public arena, openly objecting to President Eisenhower's strategy in

numerous public statements. As Chief of Staff of the Army from 1964-1968, General Johnson disagreed with President Johnson's failure to mobilize the reserve forces during the Vietnam War. One of the "five silent men," General Johnson voiced his disagreement only in "the private councils of government."¹¹ During his tenure as Chief of Staff of the Air Force from 1994-1997, General Fogleman found himself at serious odds with his civilian superiors over several cases regarding the administration of military discipline and accountability. His divergence with their decisions in these cases ultimately led to his request to be removed from the active duty list.

This study begins with a theoretical discussion that examines in some detail the dilemma that challenges service chiefs and the influence it has on a fundamental tenet of civil-military relations in the United States, civilian control of the armed forces. Using this foundation, it is possible to review the role of military advisor in the policy formulation process of the United States and the evolution of the organization that facilitates the process of making this advice available to the Commander-in-Chief. Next, it is necessary to review the evolution of the role of the JCS in the policy process, to better define the context in which each individual officer made his decision. Finally, it is necessary to expand upon the three alternative courses of action studied to provide the rationale for choosing each course to solve the dilemma.

Each individual case study consists of three sections. The first section describes the context of the policy process that created the dilemma for the individual officer, including the development of the policy and the officer's role in its development. The second section specifically examines how the officer handled his dilemma and what course of action he chose to challenge the policy decision. The third section is an analysis of why

the policy created a dilemma for the service chief, how he evaluated options to handle the dilemma, and the effect the officer's action had on the policy and the military organization.

The goal of each case study is to answer the following questions:

1. What was the policy in question?
2. Why did the individual disagree with the policy?
3. What options did he consider for expressing his dissent?
4. What led him to adopt this particular course of action?
5. What were the short and long-term effects of the chosen course of action on the policy and the service?

The final portion of this study is a synthesis of the results, focused on determining those factors considered by each officer when making his decision to dissent and the immediate and long-term results of this dissent. By correlating factors considered and outcomes achieved, this study will attempt to compile a meaningful list of considerations for future senior military officers to consult when faced with the civil-military tension created by the need to dissent. While no such list can be an absolute, it is the goal of this study to provide a solid foundation for senior officers to use "so that one need not start afresh each time sorting out the material and plowing through it,"¹² when considering their options to challenge policy.

Limitations and Assumptions

This study has several limitations. The most obvious of which is the difficulty of assessing human motivation. In the "crucible of anxious and soul searching thought" that shapes a senior military officer's decision to challenge national policy, it is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain certainty concerning the true intention of the officer's heart and mind.¹³ Therefore, the reader will have to accept some degree of uncertainty in both the

analysis and conclusions. Second, by limiting the selected cases to service chiefs, this study ignores a wide range of issues regarding policy conflicts generated at other levels of civil-military interaction, most notably, the relationship between the Regional Commander-in-Chief and the President in the actual conduct of the war. Further, the relatively recent timing of General Fogleman's decision to request early retirement makes it difficult to assess the long-term effects of his action. Finally, it is assumed that each officer examined acted within the legal, moral, and ethical bounds with which he was familiar with and no attempt was made to draw conclusions regarding these matters.

Despite these limitations and assumptions, it is the goal of this study to increase the understanding of what previous service chiefs considered when choosing a course of action to challenge national policy. By providing a comparative, analytical examination of these three cases, the reader should emerge with an enhanced understanding of dilemma faced by the service chiefs as they manage the political-military tensions inherent in their positions.

Notes

¹ Quoted in *The Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in National Policy: A Round Table held on August 2, 1978* (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978), 11.

² House, *Military Pay Bills: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services*, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, 2529.

³ Lewis K. Sorley, *Honorable Warrior General Harold K. Johnson and the Ethics of Command* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 181

⁴ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁵ *Ibid.*, page 214. Also, General Harold K. Johnson, transcript of oral history interview by George H. Gray, 1975, 13 US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Pa. Hereafter: Gray Oral History.

⁶ Gray, Oral History, 13.

⁷ Edward L. Katzenbach Jr., "Should Our Military Leaders Speak Up?" *The New York Times Magazine*, 15 April 1956, 36.

⁸ Richard H. Kohn, "How Democracies Control the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 4 (October 1997): 143.

Notes

⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957), 417.

¹⁰ Quoted in William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1976), 261

¹¹ See H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies the Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins), 1997, 300. .

¹² Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 141.

¹³ William L. Sammon, "Military Chiefs and Presidential Policy: The Problem of Dissent." (Master's thesis, The University of Chicago, 1975), 4.

Chapter 2

Defining the Problem

The Military are entitled by law and right to a seat at the national table—there to advise, not to dominate, or command. The longer one serves in Washington the more one becomes aware of the many elements which go to make up a successful national security strategy. Of these, the military element is but one, but an important one, requiring the voice of the professional spokesman. In presenting their case before the bar of civilian leadership they are entitled to receive the same kind of attentive hearing accorded the lawyer when he presents his case to equally stern judges.¹⁴

—Maxwell D. Taylor

Many discussions of tension between senior military officers and the President of the United States are drawn to the conflict that took place between President Harry S. Truman and General Douglas A. MacArthur during the Korean War. Frustrated by the failure of his efforts within the channels of government to change President Truman's policy regarding the American military strategy, General MacArthur took his case to the Congress of the United States and subsequently to the American people. This public defiance of the authority of the Commander-in-Chief was unacceptable, resulting in the stormy removal of General MacArthur from his theater command. In one of his statements justifying his action, General MacArthur attempted to draw a clear distinction to the loyalty he owed to President Truman and the loyalty he owed to Constitution of the United States.

I find in existence a new and heretofore unknown and dangerous concept that members of the Armed Forces owe their primary allegiance and

loyalty to those who temporarily exercise the authority of the executive branch of government, rather than the country and its Constitution they are sworn to defend. No proposition could be more dangerous. None could cast greater doubt on the integrity of the Armed Forces.¹⁵

In this often quoted justification for his actions, General MacArthur gives the impression that the dilemma he confronted involved “facing the most painful question which a soldier can ever confront,” making a choice between his loyalty to the President and his loyalty to the Constitution.¹⁶ However, as General Mathew B. Ridgway pointed out, this is not the dilemma at all, for to remain loyal to the Constitution, the senior military officer must always honor and respect the authority of the President of the United States.¹⁷ To characterize the dilemma for a senior military officer contemplating challenging presidential policy as a choice between loyalty to the Commander-in-Chief and loyalty to the Constitution is incorrect. Likewise, to justify challenging presidential policy based on a higher loyalty to the Constitution is equally incorrect. The senior military officer’s loyalty must be securely anchored to the Constitution, which demands that he respect the authority of the President to make the final decisions regarding policy issues. The Senate Committee tasked to investigate General MacArthur’s dismissal clarified this point by stating,

Once the decision has been made by the properly constituted authorities the military man must support it loyally and faithfully while he remains in uniform. He is not free to substitute loyalty to his own personally developed convictions and ideals for the loyalty which he owes his superiors.¹⁸

In order to understand the dilemma faced by the senior military professional who disagrees with administration policy, it must be viewed on a different plane, in the context of the American process of policy formulation. Here, the dilemma is properly couched in simply answering the question, “what is the role of the senior military officer

in the policy formulation process of the United States and when, in performance of this role, is it permissible to express dissent?" To provide an answer to this question applicable to this study, it is necessary to examine both the theory and practice of civil-military relations and the role of the service chief within the policy formulation process of the United States.

Civil-Military Relations: Theory And Practice

In a democracy, the broad theory of civil military relations is concerned with maintaining civilian control over the military, a fundamental tenet of a democracy. Civilian control of the military involves the ability of the civilian authorities to maintain control of the military institution created to provide the security necessary to allow the government to function. The necessity to control the military institutions rests in the fact that, by nature, the same forces used to provide security from external threats could also be used to threaten the internal government of the country. "Because we fear others we create an institution of violence to protect us, but then we fear the very institution we created for protection."¹⁹ While it would be easy to measure the status of civil control over the military in terms of the relative possibility of such extreme actions as a military coup, "to focus only on coups will miss much of what is interesting about American civil-military relations."²⁰

In established democracies such as the United States, the threat to civilian control of the military does not manifest itself in the form of a military coup, but in the form of political influence and the ability of the military professional to influence policy decisions of the civilian government. When the military professional becomes overly influential in the policy decisions of the civilian leadership, the result is militarism. In

this context, militarism is defined as a situation where every decision either results in a policy consistent with military advice or, at the extreme, one that is made by the military leadership itself. The danger of militarism is that policy eventually becomes subordinate to the needs of the military and political goals are subordinate to the military objectives. Strategy becomes whatever the military is willing to do or simply wants to do, not what the civilian leadership desires it to do. The extreme danger of militarism to the civilian leadership is that the military could choose to disobey the civilian leadership by simply organizing sufficient political opposition to overturn any policy decision viewed as unfavorable or undesirable.

A corollary threat to civilian control exists from the political influence available within the military institution. The source of this influence is the respect the public holds for the military institution. Politicians and military professionals alike can exploit this phenomenon, either to gain support for, or against policy decisions. Either situation is equally dangerous, as the military professional is no longer motivated to act entirely in the best interest of national security, but must also consider the interests of the existing political affiliations. While this is not a direct challenge to the civilian government, the military institution could be used to influence the normal distribution of power between competing political parties, which could prevent those politicians not in favor with the military from gaining political power.

In an ideal democracy, effective civilian control would be achieved through the development of a military professional and a military institution free from the political process. Simply put, the military professional would not have any influence on policy decisions. In this ideal democracy, the available military advice would be injected into

the policy formulation process by the military professional at the lowest level, prior to the establishment of any “official” policy. Political leaders would only make final national security policy decisions after an honest hearing of the military professional’s independent military advice. Once the policy was made, the military professional would display the supreme military virtue of obedience and accept and execute the policy, regardless of whether or not it was consistent with the military advice.

This ideal situation would be established and maintained through a series of internal and external controls on the military institution that prevent the military professional from becoming influential in the policy process. External controls exist in the organization of the military institution and the laws that govern it. Internal controls exist within the military profession itself in the development of a specific code used to describe the proper political conduct for the military professional. Applied correctly, these controls would allow for the development of a military professional concerned only with the management and organization of violence who possesses the willingness to leave policy development to the politicians and respect the authority of the civilian leaders to determine policy.²¹

In his classic work on civil-military relations, *The Soldier and the State*, Samuel P. Huntington argues that, in theory, the most effective way of retaining control of the military institution is through objective civilian control.²² A fundamental requirement facilitating objective control involves accepting the existence of an independent military professional, but limiting the political power of this professional to the lowest level consistent with their ability to provide for the security of the state. The goal is to isolate the military from the political process that enables the redistribution of power between

competing civilian groups. To do this, the military professional must remain “politically sterile and neutral,” as the true antithesis of objective control is the entry of the military professional into partisan politics.²³ The military professional has a responsibility to limit his own role in the political arena either to represent the minimum needs essential to provide the national security of the state, or to advise the civilian leadership concerning the implications of alternative courses of action. Once decisions are made, the military professional has a responsibility to execute the policies of the state. Any further participation in the political arena can directly influence the redistribution of power within the civilian groups; and as a result, influence their policy decisions. In Huntington’s construct, such an act would drive the policy process towards militarism. The goal of establishing a body of apolitical military professionals is to facilitate a system of civilian control that “simultaneously maximizes military subordination and military fighting power.”²⁴ Objective civilian control is dependent on civilian recognition that the autonomous military professional is hired only to develop the maximum military effectiveness possible. The result is a military force oriented toward achieving military effectiveness while rendered almost powerless against the civilian leadership of the government.

Huntington qualifies his argument, however, by recognizing that complete objective civilian control is not possible in the United States, as “the real constitutional stumbling block to objective control is the separation of powers.”²⁵ The constant battle for political power between the legislative and the executive branch of government increases the probability that the military professional will be drawn into the political process as both sides seek to capture the political power that inherently resides with the military

professional. “The separation of powers is a perpetual invitation, if not an irresistible force, drawing military leaders into political conflicts.”²⁶ “A lesser measure of civilian control and lower standards of military professionalism are the continuing prices the American people will have to pay for the other benefits of their constitution.”²⁷ Thus, complete separation of the military professional of the United States from the political arena, achieving the ideal situation for civilian control of the military in a democracy, is unattainable in the United States.

The situation specific to the United States creates a dilemma for the senior military professional who is forced by the existing external controls to be politically astute and to some extent politically involved to fulfill his responsibilities. On the other hand, there is a clear bias in the American process of policy development to circumscribe the military professional’s political involvement as a necessary condition to maintain a fundamental tenet of the Constitution, civilian supremacy over the military. There exists a strong desire within the American political arena to keep the military professional separated from the politics of the policy decisions but the reality is slightly different. Instead, the very process of policy development acts to draw the military professional into the dilemma between the desire to remain apolitical and the reality of becoming politically astute to facilitate the proper policies for the best possible national security. As a result, most post-Huntington theories regarding civil-military relations in a democracy involve not how the military professional should be isolated from politics, but how the military professional should remain responsive to the political process while avoiding overt influence on policy decisions of a civilian government. According to Richard H. Kohn, in developed democracies such as the United States, “the best way to understand civilian

control...is to weigh the relative influence of military officers and civilian official in the decisions of the state.”²⁸

By the end of World War II, both civilian and military leaders recognized that future policy decisions regarding national security were too complex to allow the President to make these decisions in a vacuum. Instead, close coordination between the State Department and the military departments would be required to provide the necessary advice to enable the President to make relevant national security decisions. Further, “before the executors of foreign policy can decide what the nation out to do, they must learn from the political and military experts what the nation is able to do.”²⁹ Therefore, after two years of substantial debate, the Congress passed the National Security Act of 1947 that created the National Security Council (NSC) to “advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to national security.”³⁰ Initially, seven civilian leaders were designated as primary members of the NSC. Military advice would reach the NSC through either the Secretary of Defense or the individual service secretaries, each of whom were primary voting members.

To generate military advice, the Congress legislated the organization of Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), originally created in 1941 to provide strategic advice and direction for the President to the United States’ war effort. In 1947, the JCS was given statutory authority to “act as the principal military advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense.”³¹ Initially this organization consisted of the three service chiefs and a fourth Chief of Staff to the Commander, an optional appointment that was never filled. As a result, acting together the service chiefs were the primary source for formulating military advice and their medium to get this advice to the President was the NSC.

After two years of operation, the shortcomings of the initial attempt to reorganize national security policymaking were exposed. The NSC had evolved into an uncontrollable forum, congested with the multitude of advisors necessary to support the primary members. According to Secretary of Defense of James V. Forrestal, there were simply too many members to allow the NSC to serve as a useful forum to debate national security issues. President Truman also felt that the Secretary of Defense did not have the authority to carry out his responsibilities to set general policies and procedures encompassing the entire national defense establishment. Therefore, following the recommendations of President Truman, Congress amended the original National Security Act in 1949. Significant amendments included unifying the three individual services under one Department of Defense and designating a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to coordinate activities of the JCS. With the unification of the services, the individual service secretaries became subordinate to the Secretary of Defense and consequently, lost their status as primary members of the NSC. Now the NSC included just four primary members: the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense.

For the service chiefs, these changes worked against their ability to provide military advice to the policy makers as individuals. Instead, the JCS would now work towards building a corporate consensus in their military advice. The service chiefs lost an avenue to the policy makers via the service secretaries, leaving only the Secretary of Defense to carry the concerns of the military in policy development. Further, the new CJCS, while not a voting member of the JCS, was tasked to carry their advice to the NSC. In accordance with this assigned duty, the CJCS was required to inform the Secretary of

Defense and the President of those issues upon which agreement among the chiefs could not be reached.

Throughout his Presidential campaign in 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower often attacked President Truman's NSC establishment, even referring to it as "moribund."³² After President Eisenhower's election, he quickly reformed the National Security Act to strengthen the advisory role of both the NSC and JCS. To accomplish this, President Eisenhower removed the service chiefs and the Chairman from the operational chain of command. By doing this, President Eisenhower removed the service chiefs from any operational command responsibility, giving them more time to focus on providing sound military advice to the President.

In 1958, President Eisenhower directed another comprehensive reorganization of the JCS to further his ideal that the JCS existed to serve only in an advisory role. This legislation stripped the service chiefs from any command authority they retained over their forces. It also added the Commandant of the Marine Corps to the JCS and designated the CJCS as a voting member of the JCS. Finally, it continued to erode the power of the service secretaries by completely removing them from the operational chain of command. By the end of 1958, the role of the individual service chief in providing military advice to the policy makers had atrophied to one of almost a secondary advisor, supporting the CJCS. The individual service chief's advice was stifled by an organization driven toward consensus and funneled through a single representative in the NSC, the Secretary of Defense. This resulted in the subordination of the individual concerns of the service chiefs to the broader needs of the military establishment and

national defense, as determined by the CJCS. The individual service secretaries became noticeable absent from the policy development process by 1958.

Over the next 29 years, there were no fewer than 20 studies conducted on the need to reorganize either the JCS or the NSC.³³ Responding to some of the concerns in these studies the Congress enacted the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. A critical concern of this act was the need to overcome the perceived inability of the JCS to offer timely and relevant advice to the policy process. To overcome this problem, this act designated the CJCS as the principal military advisor to the President, Secretary of Defense, and the NSC. The CJCS was no longer tied to the consensus opinions of the JCS. Instead, the CJCS was free to formulate his own advice with or without the consideration of the service chiefs. This act further eroded the ability of the individual service chiefs to offer advice to the policy makers of the executive branch. Under Goldwater-Nichols, the CJCS has the authority to sequester the advice of the service chiefs inside the halls of the Pentagon.

A subsidiary role of the service chiefs is to make their advice available to each branch of Congress. Members of Congress are dependent on the testimony of senior military professionals before congressional committees to gather the information necessary to make the decisions regarding the maintenance of the armed forces. Towards this end, the Congress is protective of the right of the members of the JCS to present views opposing those of the executive branch during congressional testimony. The 1949 amendments to the National Security Act actually stipulate the right of any member of the JCS to present views opposing the president in testimony before congress. In 1958, President Eisenhower attempted to curb this right of “legalized insubordination,” but

Congress held firm and today individual service chiefs actually sign a statement saying they will present their unbiased views in testimony before Congress.³⁴

Unfortunately, the evolution of the NSC and the JCS does not guarantee that policy will be formulated with the best military advice. Certainly, the individual advice of the service chief could easily be lost in either organization. Ultimately, the use of the JCS and the NSC lies with the personality of the civilian policy makers and the desires of the President. Unfortunately, there are no rules for policy formulation and no guarantees that the available military advice is heeded, or for that matter even consulted, prior to making a policy decision. When a service chief finds that professional military advice has been or might be rejected or, is simply isolated from the policy process, the service chief confronts the dilemma under examination in this study. The service chief must weigh the importance of the military advice in the context of the overall policy decision; and based on this analysis, determine an appropriate course of action.

Depending on the context of the situation, the service chief has available a variety of possible courses of action involving either dissent or acquiescence to policy decisions. For this study, three possible courses of action for expressing dissent were examined. First, the service chief could adhere to a “traditional role” and offer dissenting advice only within the councils of the government, such as the NSC. Second, the service chief could express dissent in public forum, such as congressional testimony or public appearances. Finally, the service chief can resign, ask for relief, or request to be removed from the active list to be retired.

The “traditional role” is often projected as the proper course for the service chief to follow in expressing dissent, as it avoids even the appearance of the military professional

challenging the ability of the civilian to control the armed forces of the country. The challenge to civilian authority comes from the political credibility retained in the office of a service chief. Historically, the military profession retains a high level of confidence in the public's mind. This lends tremendous credibility to what military professionals say. As life-long military professionals, service chiefs are recognized as the cream of the country's military expertise. Therefore, the military advice they provide is highly credible and packs significant political potential.

Unleashing dissenting military advice anywhere but in the internal councils of the executive branch offers the service chief the potential to usurp the right of the civilian Commander-in-Chief to retain the ultimate decision authority in the policy process. If the service chief publicly welds military advice before a decision is made, in effect, a decision is presupposed on the civilian leader as "presidents rarely overrule military chiefs to order action."³⁵ Welding military advice in public after the decision is made fails to honor the right of the civilian leadership to be the final authority. The service chief adhering to the traditional role "abstains from insinuating their own preferred policy outcomes or outmaneuvering civilian authority even when they can get away with it."³⁶

Anchored to Huntington's vision of the military professional, advocates of the traditional role describe three acceptable roles for the service chief in the policy process. The service chief can represent the needs of the military based on a policy decision, advise the civilian leadership on the military cost of a policy decision, and execute the policy decisions.³⁷ Extreme advocates of the traditional role claim that the service chief really has just three options when they are in disagreement with a policy decision, "resignation, obedience, or revolution," as failure to honor the civilian authority threatens

to impede on the Constitutional tenet of civilian supremacy and challenging the Constitution equates to challenging the government.³⁸

Opposing the traditional role for the service chief are those advocating that a service chief should speak out publicly, within security classification limits, when disagreements with policy develop. Fundamental to this view are three assumptions. First, as the professional military advisor for the country, it is essential to inform the people of the condition of their national security and its adequacy to meet the security needs of the country. General Hoyt S. Vandenburg, first Chief of Staff of the Air Force, described this role by stating,

My job as the professional military man is to advise my superiors, including the Congress and the people, as to whether they have adequate defense now, and whether steps are being taken to provide a build-up to adequate defense at even more critical periods we may fix...Under our Constitutional principle of civilian control, it is the job of my civilian superiors and of the Congress to balance the military needs against other national needs.³⁹

Second, and more basic, is that the armed services belong to the American people who must be informed of what and how it is doing. Retired Chief of Staff of the Army General Fred C. Weyand justified this role by saying,

The American Army is really a people's Army in the sense that it belongs to the American people who take a jealous and proprietary interest in its involvement...In the final analysis, the American Army is not so much an arm of the executive branch as it is an arm of the American people...As military professionals we must counsel our political leaders and alert the American public that there is no such thing as a "Splendid little war." That there is no such thing as a war fought on the cheap...The Army must make the price of involvement clear before we get involved, so that America can weigh the probable costs of involvement against the dangers on noninvolvement...⁴⁰

Political scientist Sam Sarkesian echoes General Weyand's justification.

It seems clear that the American military belongs to the American people, and the military professionals have the duty and obligation to insure that

the people and its political leaders are counseled and alerted to the needs and necessities of military life. This cannot be done by adhering to a notion of the military profession as a silent order of monks isolated from the political arena.⁴¹

Finally, because the national security of the country is dependent on the professional judgement and objectivity of the military leaders, the civilian leaders must expect the military professional to render frank military advice. To maintain the integrity or “frankness” of this advice, the military professional must defend “his right to declare himself even on unpopular issues which may hazard his further career.”⁴² To surrender this right lessens the objectivity of military advice. In short, it is impossible to expect that complicated policy decisions involving national security will always favor the military. Nonetheless, the American public has the right to know the cost of such decisions; and it is the job of the military professional, in service to the country, to speak out and inform them. Silence is not always acceptable.

The final course of action to express dissent is to request for relief via resignation or retirement. This course of action is a means to protect the basic integrity of the military profession. The traditional role drives the military professional toward this course of action to afford the service chief the opportunity to speak out. While in uniform, speaking out threatens revolution; but retiring affords the military professional the chance to speak against policy decisions without threatening the Constitutional prerogatives of elected and appointed civilian leaders.

Resignation is also called for to protect the integrity of the military profession to insure that the military advice is heard and the civilian leadership knows the significance of ignoring this advice. To preserve the bond of trust between superiors and subordinates in the military organization, subordinates must have the confidence in their leadership to

remain loyal to the troops and if necessary, resign rather than issue an order that would result in the needless loss of life. Therefore, resignation can be considered a “final act of duty” and “one of the highest forms of loyalty.”⁴³

Ultimately, how to express dissent is a personal choice based on a multitude of issues and personal values. However, these complex issues can not be a reason to avoid challenging national policy. Instead, these issues must be dealt with prior to being caught in the middle of the dilemma. In short, it is a personal decision that must be thought through with the best possible understanding of the military profession and its role in the American society. The following cases are examples of how three previous military professionals reflected on their decisions and the results their decisions had on the military organization and the military profession.

Notes

¹⁴ Maxwell D. Taylor, “Military Advice,” address to the Fellows of the American Bar Foundation, Chicago IL, 15 February 1964. In *Vital Speeches of the Day* 30, no. 11 (15 March 1964): 336.

¹⁵ Douglas A. MacArthur an address to the Massachusetts General Court, July 1951, as quoted in Mathew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1967), 170.

¹⁶ John W. Spainer, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 1959), 234.

¹⁷ Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1967), 170.

¹⁸ Senate, *Military Situation in the Far East: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1951, 62.

¹⁹ Peter D. Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control,” *Armed Forces and Society* 23, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 150.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

²¹ Arthur D. Larson, “Military Professionalism and Civil Control: A Comparative Analysis of Two Interpretations,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 61.

²² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957), 80.

²³ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁴ Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique,” 160.

²⁵ Huntington, *The Soldier and The State*, 191.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 177.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

Notes

²⁸ Richard H. Kohn, "How Democracies Control the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 4 (October 1997): 4.

²⁹ Karl F. Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson, ed., *Decisions of the Highest Order: Perspectives on the National Security Council* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole 1988), 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, viii.

³¹ Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Defense Organizations: The Need for Change: Staff Report the Committee on Armed Services*, 99th Cong., 1st sess., 16 October 1985, 140.

³² John Pados, *Keepers of the Keys* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 61

³³ James K. Gruetzner and William Caldwell, "DOD Reorganization," US Naval Institute *Proceedings* 113, no. 11 (November 1987): 141.

³⁴ Ronald R. Fogleman, transcript of telephone interview with the author, 18 March, 1999, 13, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell AFB, AL.

³⁵ Edward N. Luttwak, "From Vietnam to Desert Fox: Civil-Military Relations in Modern Democracies," *Survival* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 102.

³⁶ Kohn, "How Democracies Control the Military," 146.

³⁷ Huntington, *The Soldier and The State*, 134

³⁸ Kenneth W. Kemp and Charles Hudlin, "Civil Supremacy over the Military: Its Nature and Limits," *Armed Forces and Society* 19, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 23.

³⁹ Senate, *Department of Defense Appropriations Bill for 1951: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Appropriations*, 81st Cong., 2nd sess., 1950, 226-227.

⁴⁰ Fred C. Weyand, "Vietnam Myths and Military Realities," *Armor* 85, no. 5 (September-October 1976): 34.

⁴¹ Sam C. Sarkesian, "The US Military Must Find Its Voice," *Orbis* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 426.

⁴² Paul R. Schratz, "On Military Advice and Dissent," *Strategic Review* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 49.

⁴³ Edward B. Atkeson, "When Duty Demands: Resigning in Protest" *Army* 42, no. 12 (December, 1992): 26.

Chapter 3

Matthew B. Ridgway, USA

I can not believe that under these circumstances it is intended to deny to any member of the defense establishment the right to speak publicly through any of the media available to other U.S. citizens.⁴⁴

—Matthew B. Ridgway

To General Matthew B. Ridgway, “no higher honor could come to an Army officer than to be chosen for this highest post on the active list,”⁴⁵ Chief of Staff of the United States Army. Therefore, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower offered Ridgway the opportunity to serve as the Army’s nineteenth Chief of Staff, he gladly accepted. Ridgway approached his tour as Chief of Staff with several goals, including one that involved laying “the groundwork for a totally different Army - an Army that could fight and win a nuclear war.”⁴⁶ In attempting to accomplish this goal, Ridgway’s ideas regarding the Army’s role in nuclear war and its importance in maintaining the overall security of the United States directly opposed the ideas that President Eisenhower used to project his vision of a “New Look” security strategy for the United States. Ridgway did not stand idle and watch the policy decisions of the President degrade the “fighting force on which rested the world’s best hope for peace.”⁴⁷ Instead, he challenged the President’s decisions by simultaneously voicing his opposition both to the policy makers of the Eisenhower administration and to the American public.

Context

The overarching desire to balance the federal budget by 1956 fueled President Eisenhower's vision of the New Look security strategy. Because President Eisenhower inherited a federal budget that projected a \$10 billion dollar deficit in fiscal year 1954, Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey desperately needed to extract substantial savings from this budget to improve the chances of achieving a balanced budget by 1956.⁴⁸ These savings would come from the country's largest spender, the Department of Defense, and were justified by a new foreign policy championed by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. This foreign policy was constructed "to depend principally upon a great capacity to retaliate instantly and at places of our own choosing" and relied very little on the actual use of military force prior to this retaliation.⁴⁹ Instead, it was dependent on the threat presented by nuclear weapons to deter attacks on the security interests of the United States. Fundamental to this foreign policy was President Eisenhower's opinion that the next war was certain to involve nuclear weapons. Consequentially, in developing a corresponding security strategy the priority for defense spending was placed on improving the country's nuclear weapons capability. In President Eisenhower's mind, what would become to be known as the "New Look" security strategy was little more than a redistribution of resource allocation amongst the combat forces of the United States.⁵⁰

To "sell" this redistribution, it was critical to President Eisenhower to secure the support of the Republican Congress. According to Richard Saunders, President Eisenhower thought the best way to lead the country was not by acting with "dominance and presidential influence but by building an executive-legislative team that would

maintain the unity necessary to solve national problems.”⁵¹ Although President Eisenhower was elected as a Republican, this did not guarantee the support of influential Republican legislators. Key to obtaining congressional support for New Look would be unified support for its military merits by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) during their annual trips to Congressional hearings involving national defense. To appease the concerns of influential Republican Congressmen, particularly Senator Robert A. Taft, who desired military chiefs with views more acceptable to the Republican Party, President Eisenhower essentially purged the service chiefs he inherited from the Truman Administration.⁵² He replaced three service chiefs and the Chairman of the JCS (CJCS) in the summer of 1953.

His selection to serve as the Chairman of the JCS was Admiral Arthur W. Radford, who met the “President’s criteria in military thinking and also satisfied the suspicious [Republican] party factions whose support was critical in the months ahead.”⁵³ An influential leader of the “revolt of the Admirals” in 1949, Radford eagerly embraced the concepts of the New Look and acted as a leading advocate for its value to the United States. In a speech to the National Press Club in December of 1953, Radford introduced the country to their new defense strategy stating, “A New Look is a reassessment of our strategic and logistic capabilities...It is a searching review of the national military requirements for security.”⁵⁴ Further on in his speech, Radford claimed that,

Secretary Wilson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have agreed that we must fulfill these requirements with due regard for not only military factors, but also a wider range of political and economic factors, as well as the latest technological developments. In this day and age, the military must be realistically concerned about keeping our national economy strong as an indispensable bulwark of the Free world.⁵⁵

Actually, nothing could have been further removed from the professional ideals of Ridgway in regards to both the importance of the national economy to national security and the suggestion that the service chiefs should give “due regard” to anything but the military perspective of a policy decision. For Ridgway, all the discussion regarding a robust national security policy would be moot if the country’s first investment was not in national security as “national policy should place security requirements above cost.”⁵⁶ Radford’s willingness to modify his security recommendations based on an understanding of the political and economic conditions was, in Ridgway’s mind, beyond the capabilities of the military professional. Instead, Ridgway believed that the military professional should only consider military factors in formulating military advice. To clarify his position to Radford, he used the words of then General Eisenhower who stated before Congress that “I appear before you only as a professional soldier, to give you soldiers advice regarding national security. I am not qualified to proceed beyond the field; and I do not intend to do so.”⁵⁷ That Radford would accept the idea that military professionals could contaminate military advice with political and economic considerations was a repeated source of conflict between Ridgway and Radford and one that would never really resolve itself in Ridgway’s favor.

Inside the JCS, Ridgway was often the lone dissenter against the military advice formulated under Radford’s leadership. Operating under the existing amendments to the National Security Act, Radford was only obligated to pass Ridgway’s dissent to the policy makers as a “split opinion” paper to the majority advice of the JCS. On these occasions, Ridgway was skeptical of the ability of Radford, who he saw as a naval expert, to represent properly the concerns of the soldier stating, “no man in my opinion is likely

to have such a complete command of the facts relating to one of the big services more than his own service.”⁵⁸ Ridgway grew frustrated with the operations of the JCS and often demanded that the policy makers receive military advice directly from the country’s senior soldier. Ridgway even had his staff Judge Advocate define the criteria that would allow him to approach the President, independent from the structure of the JCS.⁵⁹ On those occasions in which General Ridgway’s “split opinions” went beyond Radford’s desk, they generally collided with the desire of Secretary of Defense Charles E. “Engine Charlie” Wilson to enact the policy decisions of the President with expediency.

President Eisenhower hired Secretary Wilson to manage the Department of Defense, not make policy decisions in regards to national security.⁶⁰ As a skilled administrator displaced from General Motors, Wilson was more interested in meeting the goals established by the President’s policies, than influencing those decisions. Consequently, inside the National Security Council (NSC), Wilson played a minimal role in formulating policy. Although President Eisenhower actively engaged the NSC to debate issues prior to establishing administration policy, these debates were left to Secretary of the Treasury George M. Humphrey, Secretary of State Dulles, and President Eisenhower. Wilson’s willingness to subordinate the Department of Defense to the politics of these individuals was inexcusable to Ridgway, who thought that

The gentlemen who accept these great posts of authority and responsibility...should be as completely divorced from politics as is humanly possible...as the power that is vested in the civilian secretaries, particularly the Secretary of Defense, is so enormous that it could do incalculable harm if applied on the basis of what is good for the party, instead of what is good for the country.⁶¹

The fact that as a “military expert” Wilson had little respect often turned into a source for political attacks on the policies of the New Look. In these situations, Wilson

resorted to a useful tactic, justifying his actions with the military reputation of President Eisenhower, since, after all, he was simply enforcing the policy decisions of the great military expert himself. Wilson challenged Ridgway with this logic and received an unequivocal statement of Ridgway's loyalty to his duty as the military professional. "I had profound respect for the President's military judgement...[but] if my deep convictions led me to take an opposite view, I would adhere to that judgement until purely military arguments proved me wrong."⁶² Wilson's overt action to enforce the New Look at any cost, combined with what Ridgway described as his preconceived notion that "the American people knew the Army was wrong," worked to make Ridgway an adversary to Wilson rather than an advisor.⁶³

If there was one civilian leader who heard the value of Ridgway's advice, it was Secretary of the Army, Robert T. Stevens. Ridgway spoke of Stevens as "a man of unimpeachable character and integrity and a gentleman" and described their working relationship by stating, "The door was always open, I could walk in anytime."⁶⁴ Although Stevens would fight several political battles for the army from the point position, he could only offer support for Ridgway in his battle against the New Look. Despite being urged by Ridgway to gain access to the NSC to "let Army people represent Army views," Stevens did not hold a seat on the NSC and would only kibitz as the primary policy makers debated decisions that would directly influence the Army.⁶⁵ Military advice to the NSC remained under Radford's jurisdiction.

Just before the start of their tours, President Eisenhower gave Radford and all the new service chiefs clear guidance on how to formulate this military advice. According to Ridgway, "he [President Eisenhower] expected the JCS to be in agreement, to agree

among themselves” as to the advice Radford would carry to the NSC.⁶⁶ Although he had previously recognized the reluctance of President Eisenhower “to make a decision if he could have the other people compose their differences,” this direction by President Eisenhower to the service chiefs left Ridgway with “great disquietude.”⁶⁷ In another meeting with the service chiefs, President Eisenhower reminded them that ultimately policy decisions are his to make and “as Commander-in-Chief he is entitled to the loyal support of his subordinates of the official position he has adopted...If the Chiefs want to complain, they should come to him privately, but once the decision is made all must follow.”⁶⁸

It did not take long for Admiral Radford to establish an initial consensus for the New Look amongst the new service chiefs. To facilitate the ability of the Chiefs to achieve consensus on a strategic plan to meet the security needs of the country and also the spending ceilings established by the NSC, Radford “imprisoned” the services chiefs aboard the Secretary of the Navy’s Yacht *Sequoia* in the lower Potomac. Radford had no intention of returning the service chiefs to land without a plan to implement President Eisenhower’s decision to save \$4 billion dollars in fiscal year 1954.⁶⁹

After two days at sea, Radford had a consensus from the three service chiefs. Fundamental to this plan were the redeployment of forward-deployed troops and a reorganization of national defense forces, shifting their focus to rapid mobilization in the time of crisis. In the absence of forward-deployed troops, this plan was dependent on capability of nuclear war to deter and negate a surprise attack. Ridgway objected to this plan based on the effect that withdrawing troops from Europe would have on the NATO Alliance and the willingness to reduce existing forces based on the unproven capabilities

of weapons still unavailable.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Ridgway would sign up to the plan “only as a subject for further investigation.”⁷¹ Regardless, Radford used this plan as a basis to provide military advice to the NSC on 27 August 1953, just two weeks after General Ridgway officially started his tour as Chief of Staff.

By October, recommendations from this report were incorporated into NSC policy directive 162/2, which established the foundation for the New Look national security strategy. On 30 October 1953, President Eisenhower signed this directive implementing as policy, a concept that Ridgway had approved only as a basis for further study. In the new military strategy and military appropriations generated from this new security strategy, Ridgway watched funding and force strength projections for the Army between 1954 and 1956 drop from \$12.1 billion to \$7.1 billion and 1.5 million to 1.17 million troops respectively. Ridgway’s tentative approval of an idea for further study was suddenly concrete national policy.

Ridgway’s Challenge to New Look

To fully understand Ridgway’s challenge to the New Look, it should be viewed in two venues: his dissent inside the confines of the executive branch of government and his public challenges before Congress and the American public. They were not mutually exclusive, and they were executed simultaneously. Ridgway would not do this quietly, either in the councils of government or in the eyes and ears of the American public.

Inside the Eisenhower Administration Ridgway, challenged the New Look in both the JCS and the NSC. Inside the JCS, Ridgway objected to the development of the military strategy, JCS 2101/113 that resulted from the National Security Strategy directed by 162/2.⁷² Ridgway repeatedly voiced objection to the overemphasis on strategic

airpower and mass bombing in the development of 2101/113. Although at times the Navy Chief would side with Ridgway's concerns regarding the overemphasis on nuclear weapons, Admiral Robert B. Carney eventually joined the team of Radford and Air Force Chief Nathan F. Twining in supporting the New Look. After an adjustment to the basic assumptions regarding allied force structures, Ridgway reluctantly supported 2101/113, reserving his right to withdraw this support should the assumptions change. By the end of 1953, 2101/113 was largely a reflection of Radford's views that resulted in the Army facing a projected cut of six divisions, leaving just 14 by June of 1956.⁷³

In subsequent reviews of the National Military Strategy, the JCS frequently readdressed 162/2. Ridgway would take a firm stance against 162/2 in November of 1954 by insisting that his views, more critical of 162/2 than those established by the corporate JCS, be forwarded to the NSC as an attachment to the JCS opinion. Although Radford delivered the attachment to Wilson, it did not make it to the NSC.⁷⁴ Repeatedly stonewalled inside the Department of Defense by Radford and Wilson, Ridgway turned his dissent toward the NSC.⁷⁵

Unfortunately, Neither Ridgway nor Secretary Stevens were regular attendees at these meetings. On the few occasions he did attend, Ridgway was willing to offer his opinions. During final debate on NSC 162/2 in August 1953, Ridgway challenged Radford's advice by restating that he had approved the ideas incorporated in the New Look simply as an area for further study, not as final decision on military policy. Unfortunately, Ridgway was unable to convince President Eisenhower, who did not even allow Ridgway's dissent to be recorded in the notes of the meeting.⁷⁶

Recognizing that the NSC was critical to President Eisenhower's decision making process and that Radford and Wilson were incapable of representing his views in this forum, Ridgway requested permission to brief the NSC personally on his objections to New Look. On 3 December 1954 he got this meeting, essentially repeating the themes he had been using in his public dissent since October of 1953. Once again, Ridgway would not change the President's mind; and soon after this meeting, based on the advice from Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey, President Eisenhower accelerated the planned cuts in defense in an attempt to extract significant savings in FY 1955. Essentially, this decision spelled defeat for Ridgway's internal dissent.

Running simultaneously with his internal dissent was Ridgway's public dissent. To engage the public, Ridgway initially intended to use both the print media and his public appearances. While seeking the required Defense Department approval to publish an article entitled "Help the Army" for a popular magazine, Ridgway's use of the popular print media was stymied by Secretary Wilson who wrote to Ridgway that "members of the 'big team' should not sign exclusive articles for the magazines."⁷⁷ Apparently unobserved by Wilson was the fact that Ridgway had already started a secondary print campaign in the military journals, even highlighting his primary battlefield as *Combat Forces Journal* in a letter dated 23 October 1953, published in the December issue.⁷⁸ The Journal fired the first shot of the campaign by reprinting "The Indispensable Weapon," a speech made by Ridgway in November 1953 that claimed that "the safety of mankind lies in the minds, hands and hearts of American soldiers standing guard on the frontiers of the free world."⁷⁹ Following this opening salvo, key officers on Ridgway's staff such as General Charles L. Bolte, Ridgway's Vice Chief of Staff, and Lieutenant General James

M. Gavin, Ridgway's Vice Chief of Staff for Operations, provided articles proclaiming the importance of the Army to national defense.

Ridgway's initial public appearance offering a challenge to New Look was made on 24 October 1953 during a speech in Lancaster Pennsylvania.⁸⁰ Here Ridgway established the initial pillars of his public message, that in war "resolute men and women rooted in this earth and fighting for their portion of it, remain the final determinant."⁸¹ Therefore, manpower was the country's first security need rejecting the notion "that new and as yet untested weapons and methods for employing them" could replace the foot soldier.⁸² Essentially these comments echoed those arguments he used in the JCS and NSC debates just weeks before. These were lofty teachings for any public audience, and just who Ridgway was really talking to is certainly debatable. Was he really trying to enlighten the public, or was he searching for Congressional support to counter the Eisenhower administration?

In January 1955, the division between Ridgway's internal dissent and public dissent collapsed, when the newly elected Democratic Congress was made aware of the extent of Ridgway's internal dissent. Somehow, details of Secretary Wilson's failure to forward Ridgway's dissenting opinion to President Eisenhower the previous November ended up in a newspaper article.⁸³ Ridgway's internal and external dissents were thus inadvertently brought together in a single stream.

The Democrats, ready to challenge a popular Republican President, quickly recognized the political value in Ridgway's challenges to New Look. Democratic Congressman Richard B. Russell, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, immediately called for congressional hearings to review national defense, announcing

that General Ridgway would be the keynote speaker.⁸⁴ Responding to Ridgway's public challenges, Secretary Wilson resorted to an old tactic, making public a letter from the President Eisenhower outlining the "President's Philosophy on Defense."⁸⁵ Wilson would accept Ridgway's offer of a public debate. Unfortunately for Ridgway however, he was no longer the moderator.

Instead, key members of Congress used Ridgway's public challenges as political support to increase spending for their favorite defense projects. Senator Stuart Symington, the first Secretary of the Air Force, called for additional hearings regarding the strategic bombing capability of the Air Force. Congressman Carl Vinson established the requirement to build additional ships for the Navy. By March 1955, the public debate on national security that Ridgway thought was essential to enlighten the American public was in full swing. Unfortunately, when Army Secretary Stevens testified that he was essentially satisfied with the proposed cuts in the Army budget, Ridgway lost his last political ally. Ultimately, "challenging Eisenhower's military logic and winning public acceptance for that challenge proved to be a political task beyond the reach of most Congressman and Senators..."⁸⁶ In June, the Democratic congress would approve a budget similar to President Eisenhower's December proposal, allocating just \$7.3 billion dollars to the Army. Ridgway's public dissent had failed to enlighten anyone concerning the plight of the Army. Therefore by offering both internal and external challenges to the New Look, Ridgway failed to change the policy decisions of the President.

Analysis

Fundamental to Ridgway's opposition to New Look was his belief in the importance of the foot soldier to meeting the security needs of the United States. Despite all the changes in warfare, according to Ridgway,

There is still one absolute weapon the employment of which dominates every consideration of national security the only weapon capable of operating with complete effectiveness of dominating every inch of terrain where human beings live and fight, and of doing it under all conditions of light and darkness, heat and cold, desert and forest, mountain and plain. This weapon is man himself.⁸⁷

For Ridgway, this belief manifested itself in the need for a strong army, as maintaining a strong army was a key ingredient to deterring aggression and necessary to signify a true sense of commitment to our allies around the world. Most importantly, it was necessary to enable the United States to conduct operations "in any quarter of the world and on any scale up to and including nuclear war."⁸⁸ Ridgway rejected the idea that the next war would automatically be fought on a global scale with nuclear weapons. Ridgway had witnessed the disastrous performance of what remained of the Army in Korea, after the Truman administration's "trimming of the fat" that reduced the strength of front-line divisions in an effort to save money. At the time, General Ridgway's predecessor, General J. Lawton Collins, had acquiesced to these force structure cuts feeling the overall effect could be minimized. Ridgway was forced to deal directly with this misjudgment in Korea.⁸⁹ Therefore, Ridgway was more prone to point out the importance of a strong army to national security rather than minimize the effects of a weak one.

Ridgway also rejected the revolutionary influence that nuclear weapons would bring to the nature of warfare. Ridgway was not convinced that the nuclear weapon and

the airpower to deliver them introduced a fundamentally new way of war stating “I am unable to recall an example in history of a nation at war losing its will to resist until its armed forces had been decisively defeated.”⁹⁰ Massive destruction of cities and civilians offered no sure key to decision in future warfare. Further, “it is repugnant to the ideals of a Christian nation [and] it is not compatible with what should be the basic aim of the United States in war, which is to win a just and durable peace.”⁹¹ For Ridgway, the most valuable use of nuclear weapons was to incorporate them into the scheme of maneuver for the land warfare, and this would require more soldiers, not fewer.

Finally, Ridgway rejected the notion that planning for national security should be subordinate to economic considerations. “National fiscal bankruptcy” would be far preferable to the threat of under-spending, which was certain to cost the United States its national heritage.⁹² Ridgway repeatedly rejected attempts to alter his military judgement based on “other than” military considerations. To allow even the perception that military decisions were based on other than military considerations would violate the bond of trust that existed between the senior military officer and his subordinates. This bond required that the decisions made by superiors be made in the light of the military situation. If politics or expediency were allowed to enter in to this equation, that bond of trust is broken and junior officers would question the military value of the senior military officer’s orders. According to historian A.J. Bacevich, the introduction of nuclear weapons to warfare tended to fog the clear distinction between military realms and civilian realms and Ridgway wanted to retain those distinctions, preserving the realm of the military professional as the warfighter.⁹³

Therefore, when Ridgway confronted the realities of the New Look, challenging the resulting policies was an easy decision because he objected to the force structures it dictated, the strategic assumptions it made, and the encroachment on the role of the senior military professional in government it entailed. Reflecting on the resulting situation Ridgway said, “Day by day, by order of my civilian superiors, I was called upon to advocate policies which if continued, in my judgement would eventually so weaken the army that it could no longer serve as an effective instrument of national policy.”⁹⁴

The compelling factor in Ridgway’s decision to voice his dissent was the importance of national security. Ridgway’s professional ethos did not allow him to accept the assumptions used to formulate the New Look. Based on Ridgway’s military experience, the New Look threatened the security of the nation by depending on “massive retaliatory striking power” as “the major deterrent to aggression.”⁹⁵ To Ridgway, this issue was directly related to the Army’s ability to provide for the national security of the United States. The severity of this issue demanded that Ridgway voice a challenge to President Eisenhower’s decisions regarding the New Look. Thus Ridgway’s goal was to change the policy decisions of the New Look.

Two critical factors drove the course of Ridgway’s dissent. The first, was Ridgway’s analysis of his situation inside the Department of Defense. Second was Ridgway’s interpretation of the role that the military professional should play in aiding the public to understand what is required to ensure their national security, and why.⁹⁶

Ridgway’s initial challenges to New Look were internal to the JCS and the NSC. Ridgway had no inhibitions to voicing this dissent in either forum because he believed that out of a “honest exchange of ideas, of very greatly differing opinions, comes the best

mature judgement and the best decisions under the circumstance.”⁹⁷ In offering opinions to this debate, Ridgway viewed the role of a member of the JCS as follows:

I view the military advisory role of a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as follows: He should give his competent professional military advice on the military aspects of the problems referred to him, based on his fearless, honest, objective estimate of the national interest, and regardless of administration policy at any particular time. He should confine his advice to the essentially military aspects.⁹⁸

When Ridgway saw that Radford was willing to subordinate his military advice to political policy, Ridgway attempted to bypass the JCS and appeal to Wilson. Unfortunately Wilson had no intention of debating policy with Eisenhower. Essentially, Ridgway was shut out of the policy debate. After these initial failures to challenge the New Look inside the government, Ridgway turned to the public.

Fundamental to Ridgway’s public dissent were two critical factors. The first was his belief that the military professional had a role in educating the public on the requirements necessary to maintain the security of the country. The second was his guarded testimony to Congress that attempted to provide military advice while maintaining the dignity of the military professional.

According to Ridgway, sound national security was dependent on public support. “The American people will stand resolute for national security if the situation, issues and objectives are made clear.... [And] if our national leadership will provide the public with a clear understanding of what is required and why...”⁹⁹ Fundamental to any National Security Strategy was a plan to marshal the “necessary public support solidly behind those elements of the basic policy which should and properly can be publicized.”¹⁰⁰ On a slightly higher plane, biographer Jonathan Soffer claims that a fundamental tenet of Ridgway’s social vision was that “public interest could transcend any interest group or

social class, and public interest could be determined by fair-minded, disinterested, but charismatic public servants like himself.”¹⁰¹ Ridgway felt the public had the right to know and that the best possible security policy would result when the public was convinced that they needed to support it.

At first glance Ridgway’s testimony before Congressional committees appears almost schizophrenic, one time challenging the New Look, another time dodging the opportunity to speak out against the decisions of the Eisenhower administration. Closer analysis however, reveals an approach to Congressional testimony that strictly adhered to his vision of the military professional. Ridgway described his role to Congress by testifying,

I am not here...to in any way oppose the decisions of the properly constituted authority. I have consistently adhered to one position, and that was I conceived it to be my duty to give my honest, forthright opinion as to what was required to meet a given set of circumstances under a given international situation. And, further, if what was provided was substantially less than what I regarded was the minimum, to give an equally forthright statement of what I conceived to be the military consequences of such substantial shortage...That is what I am doing here.¹⁰²

Ridgway recognized that President Eisenhower’s decisions were ultimately political because they involved the complex issues of economic and political concerns that he, as a military professional possessing only the military vantagepoint, could not understand. Ridgway clearly stated this position to Congress stating,

My recommendations...were, of course, made from the military point of view...I will never make a recommendation from any other basis. I recognize fully that the civil authorities of our Government who make the final decisions have many factors besides the military to equate to coordinate, and to evaluate...”¹⁰³

To challenge these decisions was beyond his capacity as the military professional. In fact, doing so would only work against Ridgway, as it would allow his testimony to be used in the political arena to challenge President Eisenhower, corrupting the apolitical

nature of the military professional. Therefore, Ridgway avoided answering questions directly aimed at President Eisenhower's policy decisions. Even at the height of his public attacks against the New Look in the spring of 1955, Ridgway refrained from direct attacks on President Eisenhower's decisions stating

Mr. Chairman, the question of whether there should or should not be reduction in the Army received consideration by duly constituted authority of our government, which made the decision in advance of submitting the budget to Congress. I would say sir, if I may be permitted to answer your question by an observation that it would seem inappropriate, in light of the fact that this decision has been properly rendered, for me to reiterate views which I did present at the time this decision was in the making. ¹⁰⁴

However, when asked to testify on the ability of the Army to meet its worldwide commitments, Ridgway used much more candor. In these situations, as the most experienced active duty soldier in America, he felt that Congressional committees were entitled to hear his military advice; and he willingly supplied it. In one of the more publicized incidents regarding Ridgway's congressional testimony, Representative Overton Brooks asked Ridgway if the scheduled reductions in the Army during FY 1956 "affect the safety of the country?" Conforming to his belief that it was acceptable to comment on the military cost of a policy decision, Ridgway answered, "I think it does, sir...we are going to have to make a major reallocation world wide...The entire Army will be affected."¹⁰⁵ Following Ridgway's testimony President Eisenhower commented, "General Ridgway was questioned in the Congress as to his personal convictions and, naturally, he had to express them,"¹⁰⁶ apparently comfortable with Ridgway's Congressional challenges.

Ridgway's approach to Congressional testimony allowed him both to speak out against the New Look and to honor the authority of the Commander-in-Chief. However, this was a difficult path for Ridgway, and it was often blurred by his testimony itself, the

reporting of this testimony by correspondents eager to report a conflict in the Eisenhower administration, and members of Congress unable to resist turning Ridgway's military advice into ammunition for their political attacks on Eisenhower. As a result, Ridgway was exposed to the realm of partisan politics. Ridgway placed the blame for allowing him to become involved in partisan politics squarely on the shoulders of the civilians because it is "incumbent upon civilian officials to see that he [the military professional] stays outside [of partisan politics] and to protect him from becoming involved."¹⁰⁷

The spring of 1955 demonstrated the consequences when the military professional is not protected from the arena of politics. While Ridgway insisted that his advice was based on his experience as a military professional, when this advice conflicted with President Eisenhower's decisions, it was viewed more as an attack on the administration than advice of any significant military value. Wilson attempted to correct this situation, publicly stating that he expected Ridgway to speak out for the Army.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, Ridgway's public statements often infuriated President Eisenhower, who by February 1955 was ready to fire him.¹⁰⁹

Prior to 1955, despite his already stated position against the New Look, Ridgway maintained substantial influence as a military advisor with President Eisenhower. It was Ridgway's advice, against that of Radford and Dulles, that played a large part in keeping the United States from attempting to aid the French with airpower, and possible nuclear weapons, in their battles in Vietnam.¹¹⁰ Ridgway viewed this as perhaps one of his greatest accomplishments during his tour.¹¹¹ Based on frustration displayed by President Eisenhower towards Ridgway in the spring of 1955, it is doubtful that Ridgway had retained such influence.

Nevertheless, Ridgway insisted on telling the Army's story to the American public rather than support policies with which he disagreed. While Ridgway clearly felt the necessity to honor the authority of the President to make policy decisions, he also felt a need to inform the American public regarding the security policies of the United States. By attempting to serve these "dual masters," Ridgway eroded President Eisenhower's confidence in him, consequentially, President Eisenhower did not renew Ridgway's appointment as Chief. Whether or not Ridgway planned to retire after two years of service no longer mattered as President Eisenhower made the decision for him.

Recognizing the shortfalls in the New Look and its devastating effect on the Army, it is useful to consider resignation as an alternative course of action. Personally, Ridgway was against resignation stating,

I deplored the fact that any senior officer would resign because of disagreement with policy, unless it was a policy so repugnant to him morally, and then he always has the option of saying, 'I will not go along with that, and you can have my resignation.'"¹¹²

Further, Ridgway was already fully engaged in the public arena therefore, it is doubtful that removing himself from the position of the Chief of Staff would have done little to impact the effectiveness of his challenge to the New Look. Actually, Ridgway probably maintained more publicity by remaining in his position as reporters were forced to listen; once retired nobody was required to listen. What really negated resignation as a useful option was that it did nothing to offer any advantage to Ridgway, as his concept of the role of the military advisor allowed him to be engaged in the public debate. For Ridgway, he was simply doing his duty as America's senior soldier, keeping the public informed of the state of their national security.

The immediate effect of Ridgway's public challenges to the New Look did little to help the Army retain force structure. By the end of 1955, the Army retained slightly over 1 million troops, down over 500,000 troops since 1953. In short, Ridgway lost one third of the Army without any significant reduction in worldwide commitments.¹¹³ Army appropriations shrank as well, decreasing from \$12.1 billion dollars to \$7.3 billion dollars in the three years from 1954 to 1957. In reality, the Eisenhower administration actually ran a \$12 billion dollar deficit in defense spending over this period. Nevertheless, it is easy to conclude that as far as the Army was concerned, in the short run, President Eisenhower achieved his desired objective with the New Look. Despite Ridgway's efforts in the public arena, there was no significant change to New Look policies, leaving the Army largely overextended and under funded, exactly the situation Ridgway wanted to avoid. Using the FY 1956 resource allocation for the Army as a benchmark, having an impotent military advisor as a service chief proved costly for the Army.

On a much broader scope, Ridgway was really challenging President Eisenhower's entire National Security Strategy. Ridgway thought that the strategy was overly dependent on nuclear weapons. Ridgway wanted a security strategy that recognized the importance of retaining capabilities that could be employed in a manner well short of nuclear war. Therefore, Ridgway's public challenge was aimed more at changing New Look in its entirety rather than just in its effect on the Army. In essence, this served as a precursor to General Maxwell D. Taylor's flexible response proposals that became the basis of the National Security Strategy in the Kennedy administration.

Perhaps, Ridgway did initiate the public interest in national security by challenging New Look. It was a slow process however, and despite the release of Ridgway's

memoirs that were critical of the New Look, the country would re-elect President Eisenhower five months later. While the public remained interested in what Ridgway was saying, the complex nature of the security strategy itself remained beyond the reach of the average citizen. What both Ridgway and Taylor experienced was that ultimately, national security remains under the jurisdiction of the Commander-in-Chief. Therefore, neither Ridgway nor his successor Talyor witnessed an end to the New Look under President Eisenhower or the development of capabilities for use in “other than nuclear wars,” leaving the Army unprepared for the challenges of Vietnam.

Summary

General Ridgway could not accept the New Look National Security Strategy as an acceptable course for the United States. For General Ridgway, following the New Look threatened the security of the United States. While General Ridgway was opposed to the New Look, he rejected the notion of resignation as a means to challenge policy decisions. Therefore, General Ridgway sought to change the New Look by conforming to his vision of the role of the military advisor that allowed him to simultaneously challenge the New Look inside the Eisenhower Administration and clearly broadcast the military cost of the New Look to the American public. Although he was ultimately unsuccessful during his tenure as Chief, Ridgway was one of the first voices that contributed to the re-definition of the National Security Strategy conducted by the Kennedy administration. Although it was General Taylor’s book that caught the attention of President Kennedy, certainly Ridgway’s ideas ran throughout Taylor’s strategy of Flexible Response.

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Chapter 4

General Harold K. Johnson

And I can only say that we were following a classic role of the military subordination to political authority...to civilian authority.¹¹⁴

—Harold K. Johnson

Any long-range plans General Harold K. Johnson had for the Army during his tenure as the twenty-third Chief of Staff changed on 4 August 1964, just one month after assuming his office, when a Democratic congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Using this resolution as a signal of public approval for military action in Vietnam, President Lyndon B. Johnson set in motion his strategy of applying graduated military force against the North Vietnamese government in an effort to persuade them to stop supporting the communist Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam. In executing this strategy, President Johnson made several policy decisions that were directly opposed to the military advice offered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). He made many more that clashed with the professional military judgement of General Johnson who consistently objected to the bombing strategy applied to North Vietnam, the “eyedropper” application of US military ground forces into South Vietnam, and the failure of President Johnson to mobilize the nation for war. However, of these three, it was President Johnson’s failure to mobilize the nation’s reserve forces that General Johnson considered the most damaging to the war effort.¹¹⁵ General Johnson did not completely acquiesce to the

President's decision not to mobilize the country for war, but he limited his dissent to the "private councils of government," adhering to his vision of the military professional.

Context

President Johnson inherited the administration of President John F. Kennedy on 22 November 1963. In this administration, President Kennedy had developed "an advisory system that limited real influence to his inner circle and treated other advisors, particularly the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), more like a source of potential opposition than of useful advice."¹¹⁶ However, this situation was not completely adverse to the political style of President Johnson and his desire "to manipulate and orchestrate the political process in order to shape a formula that could accommodate both the Great Society and Vietnam."¹¹⁷

President Johnson's leadership style dominated the decision making process of his administration. President Johnson was a veteran of Congress and the political process of Washington. This experience revealed to Johnson a system that was controlled and manipulated by powerful people, not the people they represented. In this environment, open policy debate tended to expose issues and sharpen positions making progress impossible. "Success required a masking of the issues, not sharpening them through debate."¹¹⁸ Closed door deals and accommodations between a select few of the powerful elite were essential to achieving political objectives. Thus, President Johnson easily adapted to the inner circle of advisors left by President Kennedy; and as his Presidency developed, "fewer and fewer people were accounting for an even larger share of Johnson's interactions."¹¹⁹

As a consequence of this leadership style, the National Security Council (NSC), already rendered impotent by President Kennedy, simply became useless under President Johnson as a forum to debate policy issues. Instead, President Johnson used the NSC staff as a personal staff and the NSC itself to legitimize decisions he had already made. Even this use of the NSC was incidental at best, as the NSC met just 75 times during the entire Johnson Presidency and just 16 times between 1 February, 1965 and 9 June 1966.¹²⁰ Real policy debate was conducted within President Johnson's small circle of the power elite in meetings held most often on Tuesdays over lunch.¹²¹

One of the power elite left by the Kennedy Administration was Secretary of Defense Robert S. MacNamara. Selected by Kennedy to reform the Defense Department, MacNamara quickly took charge. After the Kennedy administration's embarrassment with the Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba, MacNamara isolated himself from the service chiefs, preferring to work with a small group of civilian advisors. MacNamara did not trust the ability of the JCS to manage crisis situations effectively.¹²² By October of 1962, MacNamara was in complete control of the Defense Department, almost acting as the "on-scene" military commander over military operations related to the Cuban Missile Crisis because of his lack of confidence in the military commanders to avoid "blundering into a nuclear disaster."¹²³ In a measure to improve his confidence in the JCS, MacNamara replaced several members of that body with a "new breed" of military leaders, "team men, not gladiators," willing to defer to civilian authority.¹²⁴ MacNamara selected General Earle G. Wheeler to replace the departing Army Chief of Staff in September of 1962. On 3 July 1964, General Johnson joined the "team" when MacNamara moved Wheeler to the position of Chairman of the JCS (CJCS).

Adding General Johnson and General Wheeler to the JCS did not, however, improve MacNamara's relationship with the chiefs or his confidence in their advice. While MacNamara did meet weekly with the service chiefs, "this tended to be a cosmetic thing...sort of like a mating dance of turkeys," conducted without substantial purpose except to overcome the criticism that the civilian leadership was not using its military advisors.¹²⁵ Personally, General Johnson rarely met with MacNamara even on matters directly affecting the Army. Instead General Johnson dealt with the Secretary of the Army who would forward General Johnson's advice to MacNamara.¹²⁶

Stephen Ailes was Secretary of the Army when General Johnson signed on as Chief; but on 1 July 1965 when Stanley R. Resor replaced Ailes, any working relationship General Johnson had with the Army Secretary perished. In MacNamara's consolidation of power within the Department of Defense, he used the service secretaries as principal assistants to enact his decisions not as advocates of their individual services with the department "so that Mr. MacNamara, in effect, castrated the service secretary."¹²⁷ Resor quickly became more intent on enforcing MacNamara's decisions than representing the Army's institutional interests. This worked to erode the relationship between General Johnson and the Army secretary so much that at one point a staff officer had to function as a "go-between for Johnson and Resor."¹²⁸ General Johnson was unhappy with this role for the service secretary as the buffer between the political process and the service chiefs was gone, throwing "the senior military personnel then into a total vulnerability to media, to Congress, to a public, which they're not equipped to handle."¹²⁹

As a result of this breakdown General Johnson was almost exclusively dependent on the CJCS, General Wheeler, a frequent "diner" at the inner circle of the elite, to carry his

advice to the President. General Johnson had a high level of confidence in Wheeler to represent the views of the Army and “felt that he quite faithfully represented my viewpoints.”¹³⁰ Unfortunately, two problems hurt the ability for General Johnson to get his advice to President Johnson through Wheeler.

First, Wheeler was already hardened to the operating style of MacNamara, who would often turn to his civilian staff for military advice if the JCS could not reach a decision on an issue. To present a “split” paper to MacNamara was certain to result not in a decision between two opposing solutions offered by the JCS. Rather, the JCS would be supplied a new solution courtesy of MacNamara’s civilian staff. General Johnson felt that there was undue pressure and an unfair, unreasonable, and illogical effort by the civilian staff to get the Army to recommend things that were prepared in the office of the Secretary of Defense.¹³¹ Consequently, to retain credibility within the small circle of President Johnson’s advisors, Wheeler drove the JCS to consensus opinions that he could take forward to MacNamara to avoid the substitution of civilian mathematics for military advice. General Johnson was aware of this problem and described it well.

One of the consequences of the advisory system...as the advisory relationship hardened the opposing fractions tend to close ranks, differences that ought to be exposed and analyzed don’t appear. There is a decided effort to submerge them so they don’t appear.¹³²

Ironically, this accurately describes both the situation that developed between the staff of the Secretary of Defense and the JCS and the situation between the service chiefs as well.

A second problem was that in reality, unbeknown to the JCS, they were never a real source of military advice for the President. According to historian George Herring, the President “sought to finesse and coopt ” the JCS, making them think they were within his

inner circle of advisors rather than “leave them sulking dangerously on the outside.”¹³³ President Johnson “would rather have them inside the tent pissing out...than outside the tent pissing in.”¹³⁴ As a result, the real advice of the JCS was lost in President Johnson’s attempts to “finesse” the JCS to support his decisions.

According to General Johnson, this system did not work very well. Inside the Johnson administration there was little adherence to principle and an enormous tendency to follow the path of expediency.¹³⁵ General Johnson was somewhat unprepared for the level of accommodation required of the political process. General Johnson also became disenchanted with MacNamara’s staff “when they began to provide conclusions and then build studies around them to support those conclusions.”¹³⁶ Nevertheless, out of this environment would come the strategy to prosecute the Vietnam War.

General Johnson was not a member of the original team that envisioned graduated response, but was quickly recruited after being appointed as the Chief of Staff of the Army. In March 1965, President Johnson personally assigned him to travel to Vietnam and assess the utility of some 30 options proposed by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), to resolve the situation in Vietnam. In his instructions to General Johnson, MacNamara wrote, “you may, of course, assume no limitations on funds, equipment or personnel.”¹³⁷ General Johnson provided recommendations for 21 actions; and, over a period of several months, President Johnson initiated all these actions. This permanently linked General Johnson to President Johnson’s strategy of graduated response.

In addition to these recommendations, General Johnson included an assessment that concluded that it would take 500,000 troops and five years to be successful in Vietnam.¹³⁸

On 15 March 1965 General Johnson informed President Johnson of this assessment which would send a “shock wave” through the administration.¹³⁹ General Johnson also included an additional recommendation of immediately injecting four divisions to cut a line from the South China Sea to the Mekong River to contain infiltration from North Vietnam coming through Laos.¹⁴⁰ While this additional recommendation may have been military sound advice, it was outside of the parameters of the original 30 recommendations generated by MacNamara’s civilian staff, and was not considered for debate.

By 20 July 1965, Secretary of Defense MacNamara was ready to “expand promptly the US military pressure against the Viet Cong” and recommended that “Congress be requested to authorize the call-up of approximately 235,000 men in the reserves and the National Guard.”¹⁴¹ For General Johnson, a “fundamental basic assumption” to executing this plan was the mobilization of the reserve forces, ” and all indications were that the reserve forces would be mobilized.¹⁴²

However, on July 24, Secretary MacNamara informed the JCS that there would be no mobilization, a situation that General Johnson had not even considered in developing plans to support the troop build-up. General Johnson knew that this decision would be devastating to the Army telling Secretary MacNamara that “I cannot backup what I’m going to say but I can assure you that the quality of the Army is going to erode to some degree that we can’t assess now...I wish I had some way to prove.”¹⁴³ Regardless, General Johnson quickly acquiesced saying “Yes, sir, we’ll do the best we can.”¹⁴⁴

In a rare NSC meeting on 27 July, President Johnson rallied support for his pending decision to increase the ground troop commitment to Vietnam. Methodically, he pointed

around the room asking each person whether they were opposed to his decision. General Johnson was in attendance, but would not object to President Johnson's decision not to mobilize.¹⁴⁵ No one would object, "as the purpose of this meeting was not deliberation, but to enforce unanimity."¹⁴⁶

The following day, President Johnson announced to the nation his decision to increase the troop commitment in Vietnam. According to Mark Perry, General Johnson almost resigned immediately after this speech, reaching the White House gates before changing his mind.¹⁴⁷

General Johnson's push to Mobilize

It is difficult to determine the level of internal dissent expressed by General Johnson after President Johnson's escalation announcement to the American public. Sometime in the fall, the JCS acting as a corporate body presented to President Johnson an alternative strategy to conduct the war.¹⁴⁸ According to Charles G. Cooper, an aide to the Navy Chief at the time, the President did not like this plan, and after a string of verbal obscenities "he said something to the effect that they all now knew that he did not care about their military advice."¹⁴⁹ At a NSC meeting in January 1966, only the second since July 1965, President Johnson asked General Johnson "what do you want most to win?" General Johnson used this opportunity to challenge President Johnson's strategy by responding,

A surge of additional troops into Vietnam. We need to double the number now then triple the number later. We should call up the reserves and go to mobilization to get the needed U.S. manpower. This involves declaring a national emergency here and in Vietnam.¹⁵⁰

Despite this forthright declaration, General Johnson was unable to change President Johnson's position. Two weeks later, General Johnson challenged MacNamara again over mobilization, telling the Secretary of Defense that a call-up could indicate US determination to win the war, rally US public support behind the war effort, and prepare to meet the manpower requirements should the Chinese become involved.¹⁵¹ MacNamara was unmoved by any of these arguments, and General Johnson apparently realized his counsel would not prevail. "Our advice had been rejected, so we were good soldiers and did what we were told."¹⁵²

General Johnson had three chances to challenge the President's decision in front of Congress, but he could not muster the same courage he had found the year before. During his testimony, General Johnson willingly admitted that the JCS had unanimously advised the President to call-up the reserves. However, he was unwilling to state clearly the effects that President Johnson's decision not to use the reserves would have on the Army. By May of 1966, General Johnson had acquiesced to the President's decision and testified that while the initial use of the reserves would have reduced the initial turbulence in the active Army, it simply would have transferred this to the civilian sector of society. Further, General Johnson stated the time had passed for the usefulness of the reserves, providing the following analogy to clarify his position:

It is just about like going to Baltimore on the Baltimore Parkway or by taking Route 1. It is easier to go on the parkway and you have a lot of red lights and relatively constricted travel on Route 1. Now had we called the reserves, it would have been a parkway trip. The way we are doing it, we are fighting our way through the traffic of Route 1¹⁵³

President Johnson's decision not to mobilize the reserves repeatedly challenged General Johnson's professional ethos, several times bringing him to the brink of resignation. According to biographer Lewis Sorley, many times General Johnson

discussed resignation with peers and subordinates alike, at on point saying, “every night I go home, I wonder if I should resign” but always concluded, “if I resign, they’ll just put somebody in who will vote the way they want him to.”¹⁵⁴ General Johnson viewed his dilemma as being either to accept the President’s decision and move on or to resign, always concluding that he could be most effective in pushing his viewpoint by remaining a part of the structure rather “than one who had departed from the structure in a non-amicable way.”¹⁵⁵ General Johnson always felt he could do more for the Army remaining on as Chief.¹⁵⁶

Analysis

The primary reason for General Johnson to challenge the administration’s decision not to mobilize the reserves was that it directly opposed his fundamental military axiom, which he attributed to his Civil War hero, Nathan Bedford Forrest, “Get there firstest with the mostest.”¹⁵⁷ The fact that every military plan, previously approved by the Secretary of Defense assumed that the reserve forces would be used, was reason enough for General Johnson to challenge the decision. Although General Johnson could not immediately quantify the effect that President Johnson’s decision would have on the Army, he clearly knew that it would be devastating, almost resigning the day the decision was announced to the public. For General Johnson, this was a serious issue.

Two critical factors shaped General Johnson’s method to express his challenge to President Johnson. First, General Johnson supported the American involvement in Vietnam and adapted a “can-do” spirit when faced with President Johnson’s decision to escalate intervention.¹⁵⁸ Second, General Johnson possessed a view of the military professional that limited his options to challenge the decisions of the Commander-in-

Chief while remaining in uniform. This “can do” attitude drove General Johnson to continue to lead the Army into Vietnam while his vision of the military professional limited his influence on the policies that ruled their employment.

Contributing to General Johnson’s “can do” spirit was his fundamental belief that the America’s involvement in Vietnam was necessary. He said, “you don’t avoid Vietnam...you move in and take our stand with all that we have.”¹⁵⁹ In a speech in January 1965, even before President Johnson’s decision not to use the reserves, General Johnson made this point clear,

There is a clear need for understanding that the shot that our forebears fired at Lexington in 1775 still reverberates in the far corners of this earth and that the oppressed and people under attack look to us to uphold the principle underlying that shot at Lexington...That men who wish to free, and who are willing to fight and die for that privilege of freedom, are entitled to the support of other freemen...No greater honor can come to any man than that he stand and defend freedom. This is why the United States is in Vietnam – to defend freedom.¹⁶⁰

Supporting the need for the United States to be in Vietnam, General Johnson maintained an intense loyalty to the troops that were sent to do the fighting. For General Johnson, loyalty was a two way street. If he was asking the troops to fight, he must preserve a sense of loyalty to them and support their effort with a “can do” attitude. General Johnson’s loyalty to the troops grew from his basic loyalty to the institution of the Army. General Johnson was the leader of a significant military expansion transitioning from slightly less than 1 million troops to 1.5 million troops, and he was their spokesman.¹⁶¹ Intensifying this loyalty was the fact that General Johnson was personally involved in the assessment that led to President Johnson’s decision to deploy additional ground troops to Vietnam. As the senior leader of the Army, General Johnson did not abandon the troops sent to fight the war.

Also contributing to this “can-do” spirit was General Johnson’s belief that military advice received a fair hearing with President Johnson. Although isolated from the decision making process, General Johnson’s confidence in General Wheeler assured him that the views of the JCS were adequately represented stating, “I felt he quite faithfully represented my viewpoints...I simply recall no time when he didn’t do this.”¹⁶² Further, General Johnson claimed that, “In the case of Vietnam, the successive courses that were suggested and adopted were plausible at the time, in the context in which they were offered.”¹⁶³ Therefore, General Johnson willingly applied a “can-do” spirit towards implementing the Commander-in-Chief’s orders, accepting their restrictions stating, “ if the military is unsuccessful in making a case for overriding political objections because of military necessity it has no business complaining.”¹⁶⁴ This willingness to accept the validity of the decisions produced by the civilian leadership was the most dominating factor that shaped General Johnson’s decision not to express dissent regarding the decision not to mobilize.

General Johnson’s vision of the military professional, no doubt shaped by the Truman-MacArther controversy fifteen years earlier, was highly dependent on maintaining a sense of loyalty to the Commander-in-Chief. Following this vision, General Johnson found it inappropriate to speak against the decisions of President Johnson while remaining in uniform. If the service chief wanted to speak out against the decisions of the President anywhere but inside the executive branch of government, resignation was a prerequisite. According to historian H.R. McMaster, General Johnson felt a higher sense of “allegiance” to the President than individual Congressman, once

justifying his decision not to voice disagreement to Congress based on the National Security Act and his duty as the principle advisor to the President.¹⁶⁵

In dealing with Congress, General Johnson professed to hold a license, issued by MacNamara, to speak freely. Unfortunately, he rarely used it without some level of self-imposed restrictions. While he did use this license to challenge MacNamara's decision on military pay, he was careful to word his testimony to avoid any direct attacks on the decisions of the administration. When testifying regarding the conduct of Vietnam, General Johnson took a much more circumspect approach.

Knowledgeable of President Johnson's dealings with certain Congressman, General Johnson did not readily volunteer all his advice, instead taking the lead from Congress regarding what information should be debated publicly. Although General Johnson knew that some of the assumptions presented to Congress regarding the 1967 budget were already invalid, he waited for Congress to question him about the validity of the assumptions. When no questions were asked, General Johnson concluded, "there was an agreement between the executive and the legislative, that this kind of course of action was the one to be pursued."¹⁶⁶ Thus, if nobody in Congress wanted to discuss the false assumptions, General Johnson was not going to do so. Certainly this belief would shape his testimony in 1966 as well.

In dealing with the American public, General Johnson felt it was the duty of the JCS to go in front of the American people and explain the military situation in Vietnam.¹⁶⁷ Following this ideal, General Johnson spoke openly about the military aspects of Vietnam, even admitting as early as January of 1965 that it would require five to ten years of commitment and six to seven hundred thousand troops to get the job done.¹⁶⁸

Unfortunately, explaining how the military was going to get the job done, or military policy, quickly degraded to explaining why the military was being asked to do this job, or presidential policy. This was not the obligation of the JCS, but rather of the civilian leadership, and it was something that General Johnson felt wasn't being done. "There is an obligation on the part of the civilian official to explain to the public why these orders are being carried out, and what the purpose of them is. And I didn't find that that was done very well."¹⁶⁹

Therefore, with these two factors and the context of the situation he faced, General Johnson concluded that voicing his objection to President Johnson's decision inside the "private councils" of government was his only option. General Johnson's rejected speaking out against President Johnson's decision on mobilization because it was against his vision of the military professional and was counter to his public campaign to gain the American public's support for the war. While he contemplated resignation several times, he always rationalized against this action by concluding that he would simply be viewed as a disgruntled general, "and forgotten within a week."¹⁷⁰ Further, General Johnson had a difficult time equating such outward action to achieving the change in policy desired from his military point of view, namely, taking a more direct approach to troop deployments to Vietnam.

In this book, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff*, Lawrence Korb argues "if the Joint Chiefs had resigned en masse in the summer of 1965 when Lyndon Johnson decided to Americanize the Vietnam War with draftees, a national debate over Vietnam would have ensued."¹⁷¹ While it is easy to agree that some kind of debate would have ensued, the focus of that debate was certainly not going to be on the mobilization of the reserves.

Most likely, this debate would have engaged the fundamental decision whether or not to get involved at all, which would have been counter-productive to General Johnson's aims.

In reality, General Johnson agreed with President Johnson's decision to get involved in Vietnam, reiterating his position just days before President Johnson's address to the nation by stating "we have no choice but to answer the call to defend the right of men to be free," in another public speech.¹⁷² Further, public support for remaining involved in Vietnam in the summer of 1965 was over 60 percent, indicating that the debate would have sided with President Johnson's decision.¹⁷³ Finally, in October of 1966 the Congress authorized the call-up of over 700,000 reserves if necessary to meet the needs of Vietnam. However, even with this congressional authorization, President Johnson would not call-up the reserves. The decision remained with President Johnson and General Johnson did not change his original decision by confining his objection within the walls of the executive branch of government.

As a result of President Johnson's decision, General Johnson was never able to meet the troop requirements demanded by General Westmoreland. Although General Westmoreland would tell President Johnson as late as August of 1966, "we're going to win this war for you without mobilization," he would continue to press General Johnson for mobilization throughout the war.¹⁷⁴ According to Lewis Sorley, several years later, General Westmoreland maintained that "it was General Johnson's decision to meet my relatively modest requirements by cadreing the Army rather than insisting on a reserve call-up."¹⁷⁵ Eventually, in April of 1968, a small number of reserve units were mobilized for Vietnam. By then, recalls General Johnson, "the units were loaded with fugitives

from the draft so that their bet had been called. They had been gambling that they wouldn't have to serve if they went into the reserves...this they hadn't bargained for so they went to court, ”¹⁷⁶ only acting to further erode the Army's capability.

Building an Army without using the reserves was a painful lesson in failure. Initially, General Johnson pillaged the active duty strategic reserves from “227,000 troops in May 1965 to only about 96,000 in trained strength by January 1966. Eventually, General Johnson was forced to strip combat units in Europe and Korea of needed manpower. To a conference of Army Lawyers, General Johnson committed, “basically...over 70 percent of the Army today has less than two years service. You can complain about this all you want to, but there is one hard fact-this is what we have.”¹⁷⁷

In overseeing the build-up of the Army, General Johnson became less focused on debating military policy decisions with the civilian leadership. As a result, his valid military advice spent an inordinate amount of time on the sidelines because people simply were not listening to General Johnson. No where is this effect more dramatic than in the circumstance surrounding the military strategy used to counter the Viet Cong insurgency.

After returning from his trip to Vietnam in March of 1965, General Johnson felt that General Westmoreland's military strategy of attrition involving large conventional engagements was fundamentally flawed. As a result, General Johnson initiated “A Program for the Pacification and Long Term Development of Vietnam (PROVN),” a study designed to develop a counterinsurgency strategy for Vietnam.¹⁷⁸ Essentially, this study resulted in the development of a counterinsurgency strategy that focused not on “body counts” but on providing security to the people that “constitute both the strategic

determinants of today's conflict and the object...which lies beyond the war.”¹⁷⁹ PROVN was completed in March of 1966 eventually reaching MacNamara's desk by November.¹⁸⁰ Unfortunately, it would take until 1968 to implement the findings generated in PROVN into the military strategy for Vietnam.

In hindsight, PROVN appears to have been a viable strategy for “winning” the Vietnam War. General Johnson had the ideas for this strategy as early as 1965; but because he allowed the isolation and subordination of his military advice to persist, it took a year of study and another year of briefings before he could exert his influence the military strategy used to conduct the war. This was a slow process to get military viable military advice into action. One reason is that General Johnson accepted the status as a secondary advisor to the President, rather than the principal advisor he should have been. As a result, the Army continued to conduct essentially a flawed strategy for three years. While it is unrealistic to point a finger at one person for the failures of Vietnam, certainly General Johnson realized that by subordinating his military advice, he became part of the problem rather than part of the solution. This was the failure that haunted him the rest of his life.¹⁸¹

Summary

General Johnson did not agree with President Johnson's decision not to mobilize the reserves, but he was willing to accept it. While General Johnson challenged the decision several times inside the executive branch, he did not voice objection to the decision in public because in his mind to have done so would have required him to resign his position as chief. His intense loyalty to the Army, which manifested itself in a “can do” attitude, prevented General Johnson from resigning and speaking out against this

decision. Speaking out while remaining in uniform conflicted with General Johnson's public campaign to rally public support for the Army in time of war. In short, General Johnson left himself with only two options, stay and comply or leave the Army. General Johnson always concluded he could do more for the Army remaining on the active duty list, than on the list of retired officers. Thus, he faced the onerous task of implementing a strategy with which he had substantive reservations.

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¹²⁶ Glover Oral History, Section 11, 4.

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- ¹³⁹ Ibid., 166.
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- ¹⁴⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Vol. III Vietnam June-December 1965* (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1996), 260-262.
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Chapter 5

General Ronald R. Fogleman, USAF

*As a military leader when you are giving military advice, you are smart enough to understand that there is a political dimension to it. But because of everything that has gone before...my Vietnam days, all my days as a commander...The number of times I went to Dover or Elmendorf to pin purple hearts on caskets, you realize that there is a dimension to this that most civilians never experience. Your loyalty to the Constitution and the institution and the troops has got to be far greater than any loyalty to civilians.*¹⁸²

—Ronald R. Fogleman

General Ronald R. Fogleman was somewhat surprised by his selection to serve as the Air Force's fifteenth Chief of Staff. Nevertheless, on 28 October 1994, he filed his initial flight plan with the Air Force as Chief. This concept involved putting the finishing touches on the various changes that had taken place in the Air Force since the end of the Cold war, nothing major, simply "trimming an aircraft in flight rather than making a hard turn."¹⁸³ At first, General Fogleman did not believe accountability would be an issue that required his attention. Unfortunately, numerous incidents placed accountability into General Fogleman's "in-basket," and he was forced to "deal with it."¹⁸⁴ In the course of establishing accountability for force protection failures associated with the terrorist bomb attack on Khobar Towers military barracks in Saudi Arabia, General Fogleman recognized that his "thesis" regarding accountability in a military organization would directly oppose the pending decision of Secretary of Defense William S. Secretary

Cohen. Because the relationship between Secretary Cohen and General Fogleman had eroded to the point at which General Fogleman thought he was giving good military advice and “and in the main, it was being ignored,” he determined that “it was time to retire”¹⁸⁵

Context

The terrorist bombing of Khobar Towers, a military compound near Dhahran Saudi Arabia used to house US military personnel supporting OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH, was just one event in a long list of highly publicized incidents that forced General Fogleman to face the issue of personal accountability. Discipline decisions regarding a friendly fire incident over northern Iraq; an aircraft crash in Croatia that killed the Secretary of Commerce; an aircraft accident in Washington State involving a pilot previously identified as reckless; and an F-15 accident in Germany, all passed through General Fogleman’s “in basket” forcing the Air Force to “carefully re-examine where to draw the line separating mistakes from crimes.”¹⁸⁶ To a watchful media covering these events, this line was anything but clear.

Throughout his tour as Chief, General Fogleman worked to establish a uniform “thesis” on Air Force accountability. The focus of this effort was to establish a set of institutional core values. But important to General Fogleman was another portion of his effort that tended to be overlooked: “accountability has two sides. If you are found wanting you should expect to be punished. If you are examined and found not wanting, the institution ought not punish you.”¹⁸⁷ Fundamental to this “thesis” was the institution’s obligation to state clearly and make known the expected standards of conduct. When this was done, these standards had to be enforced and used to establish individual

accountability. General Fogleman's accountability "thesis" was put to the test in the investigation surrounding the terrorist bombing of Khobar Towers.

On the evening of 25 June 1996 a terrorist truck bomb exploded just outside the northern perimeter fence of Khobar Towers killing nineteen American service members.¹⁸⁸ In response to this attack, then Secretary of Defense William J. Perry tasked retired Army General Wayne A. Downing to make "an independent assessment of the circumstances surrounding the bombing."¹⁸⁹ The Downing Report, was completed on 30 August 1996. Among many other observations it found fault with the efforts of the 4404th Wing Commander, Brigadier General Terryl Schwalier, to take adequate force protection measures at the Khobar Towers facility. As a result of these allegations, Secretary of the Air Force Sheila E. Widnall and General Fogleman designated Lieutenant General James Record as the "disciplinary review authority and General Court-Martial Convening Authority regarding any actions or omissions by Air Force personnel."¹⁹⁰ A significant finding of this review, completed on 31 October 1996 was that the 4404th Wing Commander performed in a "reasonable and prudent manner...[and] was not derelict in the performance of his duties."¹⁹¹ For General Fogleman this was an honest review of the situation based on the duties that Schwalier was required to perform as Wing Commander. In General Fogleman's evaluation, Schwalier was found "not wanting." Unfortunately, for outgoing Secretary of Defense Perry, this report it was another curve in the line of accountability and was simply too controversial to release with Presidential elections just days away.

On 24 January 1997, President William J. Clinton appointed William S. Cohen, a former Republican Senator from Maine, as the new Secretary of Defense. One of

Secretary Cohen's first tests was deciding between the findings of the Downing Report or the Record Report in assigning blame for the bombing of Khobar Towers. Certainly, Secretary Cohen arrived at the Pentagon with enough information to make a decision between the Downing and Record Report, having sat on the congressional committee that conducted hearings on the Khobar Tower bombing in September of 1996.¹⁹² Nevertheless, Secretary Cohen deferred his decision and directed Under Deputy Defense Secretary John White, trustee of the Record Report since October, to ask the Air Force to review the report again, to attempt to establish some accountability.¹⁹³

It is difficult to characterize the nature of any challenge to the Downing Report that General Fogleman expressed to Secretary Cohen inside the "private councils of government." Hindering any internal dissent offered by General Fogleman was the fact that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS), General John Shalikashvili supported the Downing Report, forcing General Fogleman to proceed directly to Secretary Cohen.¹⁹⁴ However, according to Fogleman, it was difficult to approach Secretary Cohen privately, as "he was a very political kind of guy. You could never get to see him one-on-one. He always had a whole bevy of backbenchers anytime you wanted to talk with him on anything."¹⁹⁵ Isolated from Secretary Cohen, Fogleman looked for help in Congress, which no doubt excited Secretary Cohen's "backbenchers."

On 25 February 1997, General Fogleman changed the forum for the Defense Department's debate between the Downing Report and the Record Report in his public testimony to the Senate. During questioning, Idaho Senator Kempthorne, asked, "Do you think that a commitment to the chain of command and accountability, which the armed services adhere to, means that some American officer necessarily made as error in this

[Khobar Towers] tragic situation?”¹⁹⁶ General Fogleman’s answer came in two parts.

First he explained his “thesis” on accountability stating,

When somebody’s actions are examined...and they are found not wanting, then it is criminal for us to try and hold somebody accountable or to discipline somebody for political correctness or because the media has created frenzy based on partial information or not full facts.¹⁹⁷

In the second part of his answer, General Fogleman applied his “thesis” to the Khobar Towers situation stating, “based on my military judgement, we have a situation where I cannot, in my mind, justify any kind of action against anybody in the chain of command.”¹⁹⁸ Secretary Cohen perceived General Fogleman’s remarks as a pre-emptive strike in a public battle to pressure him to make a decision that accorded with the Record Report. For General Fogleman, it was a lengthy editorial explaining the importance of maintaining true accountability in a military organization and an attempt to rally congressional support for the Record Report.

Unfortunately, the public nature of the debate quickly turned the issue into a leadership challenge between Secretary Cohen and General Fogleman. An editorial in the *New York Times* on 15 April 1997 was characteristic of the nature of the new issue.

The principle of civilian leadership of the military requires the application of independent judgement in cases like this.[Khobar Towers] Since Air Force Secretary Sheila Widnall seems a willing captive of her service, Mr. Cohen must show that accountability in the military is not governed by the protective instincts of the officer corps...General Fogleman mistakes his own blind loyalty for leadership... but Mr. Cohen might actually do wonders for the morale of Americans in uniform if he rules that the Air Force cannot escape responsibility for its failures in Dhahran.¹⁹⁹

The issue was now far greater than simply accountability for the bombing of Khobar Towers.

Another critical test of Secretary Cohen’s ability to exert his leadership on the Pentagon was the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). Although the review was

conducted prior to Secretary Cohen's arrival at the Pentagon, Secretary Cohen was able to amend the results. Caught up in these changes was the production program for Air Force's new air superiority fighter aircraft, the F-22. In December of 1996, the Air Force Joint Estimating Team determined that the worst case production costs of the F-22 would approach \$61 billion dollars for 438 aircraft while the most likely cost would be \$48 billion dollars.²⁰⁰ In April, the Cost Analysis Improvement Group (CAIG), part of the defense Secretary's staff, estimated that F-22 production costs could equate to \$64 billion dollars, thus contradicting the Air Force numbers. Immediately, Secretary Cohen responded with support for the CAIG's numbers, expressing his intention to cut the F-22 production program if the cost increased.²⁰¹ In a form reminiscent of MacNamara's defense department, Secretary Cohen had placed the highest emphasis for determining the future force structure of the Air Force on cost.

In the final report of the QDR, final F-22 production was reduced from 438 to 339 consistent with Secretary Cohen's faith in the CAIG numbers and his intention to reduce costs.²⁰² The Air Force objected to the use of the word "full" in the final QDR report to describe their participation in the QDR itself as the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) "did not extend collaboration on QDR analysis and recommendations thoroughly down the chain of command."²⁰³ General Fogleman wrote a letter directly to Secretary Cohen expressing disagreement with the F-22 decision and got "kind of a dead bug response, although he [Secretary Cohen] did consider my input and make some modifications to his position."²⁰⁴ General Fogleman felt that his advice as an airpower expert was excluded during the QDR process, stating, "I thought we got to a position where we had amateurs making policy, giving advice to the SECDEF, who wasn't that

knowledgeable himself. In the end it was driven more by politics than it was by military logic or experience.”²⁰⁵ General Fogleman did not hide his position from the Senate, stating his “non-concurrence” in response to question during Senate hearings on the QDR.

Noticeably absent from this conflict between Secretary Cohen and Fogleman was General Shalikashvili, the Chairman of the JCS, and Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall. As the military advisor to Secretary and the President, General Shalikashvili would have offered General Fogleman another avenue to provide military advice to Secretary Cohen. Unfortunately, General Shalikashvili apparently held views differing from General Fogleman’s on both the QDR and the Downing Report. In accordance with the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, it is acceptable for the CJCS to formulate military advice independent from the service chiefs with no need to present alternative opinions. In the case of the QDR, General Shalikashvili clearly supported its conclusions and the processes used to develop it stating “the level of CINC and service chief involvement in this process, some would say has been unprecedented and has been a major strength of this review.”²⁰⁶

Secretary Widnall remained clear of the Schwalier case most likely because of her involvement in the punishment process and the desire to protect herself against accusations of command influence. However, General Fogleman notes that although he “thought a great deal of Secretary Widnall,” she was unable to run interference on the political issues because “she had no political constituency. The folks on the hill tended to, not pay much attention to her. As a result I got drawn into working political issues that should have been worked by the civilian leadership.”²⁰⁷ Widnall was also a major

proponent of the F-22 in Congress, but it was General Fogleman who spoke of both the Air Force's "non-concurrence" with the QDR and support for the Record Report.

Casting a shadow over the release of the QDR were several more challenges to Secretary Cohen's desire to achieve full accountability for sexual harassment cases in the Department of Defense (DOD). In April 1997, The Army initiated its prosecution of several drill sergeants accused of sexually harassing female recruits at the Aberdeen Training Facility. These courts-martial were completed with only one drill sergeant being convicted of the most serious charges. Also in April, the Air Force initiated court-martial proceedings for Second Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, based on several charges including adultery. The Flinn case would put General Fogleman's "thesis" on accountability to a political test.

In an orchestrated media attack on the Air Force, Flinn's defense team turned the case toward the public eye. Essentially "using" the media, the Flinn team made the case appear as though Flinn was singled out for being female, not for being an adulterous.²⁰⁸ According to Secretary Widnall, after bungling an initial press release in February, the Air Force remained silent in the press, to protect the "accused's rights to a fair trial, avoiding improper command influence and protecting privacy rights."²⁰⁹ But this media campaign worked, and General Fogleman would see the civilian leadership wanting "to make an exception because somebody was female and the Air Force was getting beat up by the media."²¹⁰

In accordance with General Fogleman's accountability "thesis," to make an exception would undermine the credibility of the Air Force leadership and project the image of a dual standard. General Fogleman "believes strongly that nothing destroys

morale, discipline in the force quicker than a dual standard or situational ethics.”²¹¹ In regards to the charges against Flinn, General Fogleman had worked extremely hard to update the Air Force standards on professional conduct and fraternization, even directing the publication of a new regulation in 1995. For General Fogleman, the standards were clearly known and should be uniformly enforced. General Fogleman was pitted against a civilian leadership willing to make an exception for political expediency and his desire to do what was consistent with his view of accountability. On 21 May, General Fogleman would again take his views to Congress stating,

And so the Kelly Flinn case is very much like the Khobar Towers case. I would really like to see people not comment so much on it until they have all the facts...Some of them [facts] are starting to come out. And I think that, in the end, this is not an issue of adultery. This is an issue about an officer who is entrusted to fly nuclear weapons, who disobeyed an order, who lied. That is what this is about.²¹²

In an attempt to relieve the pressure on the Air Force, Secretary Widnall negotiated an agreement with Flinn for resignation in lieu of a court martial. Flinn received a general discharge that General Fogleman thought, “was about right.”²¹³ Unfortunately, the public nature of this case put General Fogleman into the media spotlight and pitted his military advice against the civilian leadership. In the Flinn case, General Fogleman wanted the civilian leadership to stand strong in the face of criticism, believing the facts would prove him correct.

One week later, in a speech to graduating cadets at the Air Force Academy, Flinn’s alma mater, Secretary Cohen justified the need to uphold what appeared to be “Victorian values in the age of Aquarius,” and emphasized that “to serve as America’s guardians, you must uphold the highest standards of conduct in the world.”²¹⁴ In an ironic twist, Secretary Cohen was forced to redefine these high standards in defending his choice for

Air Force General Joseph Ralston to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
(CJCS)

General Ralston was “promoted” by General Fogleman as the perfect candidate to succeed retiring General Shalikashvili as CJCS.²¹⁵ As Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Ralston had handled the QDR process well and as a result, become Secretary Cohen’s first choice for CJCS. But just days after announcing support for Ralston, Secretary Cohen was forced to re-draw the line of moral standards for military officers when news of Ralston’s four-year affair in the late 1980’s was revealed in public. This news blindsided Secretary Cohen who continued to support Ralston but was unwilling to forward his official nomination to the President. Thus, General Fogleman was now asking the political leadership to stand-up for Ralston immediately after punishing Flinn. The media did not allow the appearance of a double standard to go unnoticed, and the political battle unfolded. The first casualty was General Ralston, who withdrew his name from consideration for the job of CJCS. General Fogleman lost his best chance to get an Air Force officer to be appointed to serve as Chairman.

General Fogleman’s Resolution

Lying dormant through all this was the decision on accountability for the bombing of Khobar Towers. In late June, it became obvious to General Fogleman that the decision on Khobar Towers would favor the Downing Report and result in some level of punishment against Brigadier General Schwalier. The festering controversy between Secretary Cohen and General Fogleman soon reached its peak. General Fogleman’s concern was that Secretary Cohen would no longer be able to make a decision based on the facts of the Record Report and instead was simply focused on the political

acceptability of the Downing Report. According to General Fogleman, “the press had built this [Khobar Towers] up to where it was a Fogleman-Cohen manhood issue. I was smart enough to know that I was never going to win that issue.”²¹⁶

In a final effort to influence Secretary Cohen’s decision process, General Fogleman timed his decision to submit his request for retirement prior to Secretary Cohen’s final decision so “maybe he [Secretary Cohen] would have the courage to make a decision on the facts, not on some political basis or from some posturing position.”²¹⁷ Offering clarification to his decision General Fogleman said,

From my perspective I decided to take the issue off the table. By doing so, this guy would have the opportunity to make the right decision. Because I was genuinely concerned about the message that was being sent to the Lieutenant Colonels and the Commanders and Lieutenant Commanders, the guys that were out there on the leading edge, who were out there hanging it out. The thing they learned from Secretary Cohen's action on the Schwalier case is that in spite of their best efforts when something happens, they know that they are not going to get the support out of the congress or the civilian leadership of the Department of Defense. The Washington insiders are going to hang them out to dry because that is the knee jerk reaction of uninformed public figures.²¹⁸

Just four days after General Fogleman’s announcement of his decision to ask for retirement, Secretary Cohen released his decision to accept the findings of the Downing Report and punish Schwalier. In Secretary Cohen’s determination, “Brig Gen. Schwalier’s actions with respect to force protection did not meet the standard required for a Major General....”²¹⁹ Removing Schwalier from the Major General’s promotion list essentially forced him to retire. General Fogleman’s advice was rejected, and his retirement did not change the Secretary’s decision.

General Fogleman’s testimony to Congress in regards to the Schwalier case and his non-concurrence with Secretary Cohen’s decision on F-22 production probably inflamed an already smoldering relationship between Secretary Cohen and General Fogleman.

General Fogleman's insistence on punishing Flinn and "failure to report" Ralston's prior indiscretions probably extinguished any hopes of rekindling a viable relationship between the two. Rather than hang on until the end of his tour, leaving the Air Force with no viable spokesman and any useful relationship, General Fogleman concluded that it was time to retire. In a final "challenge" to Secretary Cohen he timed his request for early retirement to allow Secretary Cohen to base his final decision on accountability for Khobar Towers on the facts.²²⁰

Analysis

General Fogleman could not accept Secretary Cohen's decision to punish Schwalier based on two factors. First, to punish Schwalier directly contradicted his larger thesis of military accountability. Second, to allow it to happen would undermine his personal credibility with the rest of the Air Force as he could not accept the message that his action would send to the Air Force while remaining true to his internal moral compass.²²¹ For General Fogleman, this was an important issue, and he was unwilling to accept a decision from Secretary Cohen in favor of the Downing Report. General Fogleman placed a high level of importance on avoiding "scapegoating" in determining accountability for the Khobar Towers bombing.

Two critical factors drove the course of General Fogleman's dissent. First, General Fogleman's vision of the role of the service chief in government that allowed him to use candor in congressional testimony to defend the Air Force and "rally" support for the Air Force's position. Second, General Fogleman's view that his valid military advice was simply being viewed as political attacks on the administration, and consequentially

ignored. When these factors collided with the context of this situation, General Fogleman concluded that another chief would better serve the institution of the Air Force.

Certainly, Secretary Cohen arrived at the Pentagon with enough information to make an immediate decision between the Record Report and the Downing Report, and it remains unclear why an additional review was required by the Air Force. What is clear is that during this additional time, General Fogleman decided to take the Air Force's case to Congress. Whatever internal advice General Fogleman offered to Secretary Cohen inside the Pentagon was not working. Because General Fogleman considered this an issue of critical importance, an internal challenge was not enough.

Therefore, General Fogleman engaged Congress on this issue because of both its importance, and the inability of the Secretary Widnall to develop a congressional constituency to support the Air Force on the issues surrounding Khobar Towers. For General Fogleman, it was acceptable conduct for a service chief to be frank during congressional testimony, particularly given the gravity that he placed on this issue.

Once he exposed his position to Congress, he witnessed two immediate effects. First, his purely military advice was now seen as an attack on Secretary Cohen rather than for its value as advice from a professional military officer with 34 years of experience at leading military organizations. Second, after exposing his position in public, General Fogleman could not be true to his internal beliefs if he presided over a decision he simply felt was wrong for the Air Force.

General Fogleman's congressional testimony put Secretary Cohen in a difficult position as it presupposed a decision regarding accountability for the bombing of Khobar Towers. If Secretary Cohen decided in favor of the Downing Report, he would have to

do so over the public objections of a service chief. Certainly this would expose Secretary Cohen to political attacks, an undesirable position for a new Secretary attempting to establish some level of leadership over the Defense Department and in the reformed administration of President Clinton. Thus, rather than accepting General Fogleman's advice as military advice, Secretary Cohen interpreted this advice as a direct attack against his ability to lead the military as the Secretary of Defense.

Once General Fogleman stated his position in public, he could not remain consistent with his internal value set if he presided over a decision he felt was being forced on the Air Force by the civilian leadership. To do so would not only erode his credibility with the Air Force, it would also be inconsistent with his internal "moral compass," particularly when viewed in the broader context of General Fogleman's attempt to work the "accountability issue" in the Air Force. Thus, there was a level of moral judgement that influenced General Fogleman's decision to ask for early retirement.

In the short term, General Fogleman felt that his decision reminded the civilian leadership that "the senior military leader does in fact have an option other than just sit and take it or be ignored, going away is in fact an option."²²² General Fogleman thinks that this might have been influential in the administration's decision not to sign an international treaty banning landmines soon after his departure, stating, "the civilian leadership didn't want to have the chiefs rebel in mass on this issue."²²³ If this is true, and military advice prevailed in this intense political battle in part because of General Fogleman's retirement, it is possible to rate General Fogleman's decision as doing some good for the armed services by escalating the importance value of listening to military advice to the policy makers in the Clinton administration.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to prove such cause and effect. The landmine case is far different from the showdown between Secretary Cohen and General Fogleman. By May of 1996, President Clinton had announced his decision not to support an immediate and total ban on some types of landmines.²²⁴ When the issue resurfaced in September of 1997, Secretary Cohen and the JCS were working together against a total ban on the use of landmines. Thus, to conclude that General Fogleman's decision to retire early weighed on the Clinton administration's decision to support the Defense Department's position against banning landmines is speculative.

In the long term, it is even more difficult to assess the value of General Fogleman's decision. As the first service chief to ask to leave the position early, the relatively small level of debate regarding the issues surrounding his departure appears to indicate that the value of this course of action to the senior military professional attempting to challenge the policy decisions of the civilian leadership is minimal. The Clinton administration remained willing to develop policy that conflicted with the advice of the JCS; and in September of 1998, a united JCS exposed their advice in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee. To a man, the Chiefs testified to the committee that the fiscal constraints on the military budget, as a result of past policy decisions of the Clinton Administration, severely threatened military readiness.²²⁵ Unfortunately, the Committee's response was tainted by accusations that the Chiefs had mislead Congress in February of 1998 about the severity of the problems that were eroding the ability of the armed services to meet the demands of the current missions. While the service chiefs did not simply "sit and take" the policy decisions with which they objected, the result was less than favorable to the chiefs, exposing them to questions regarding their own integrity

as an institution to provide objective military advice. The service chiefs were “caught in the middle” between supporting the President’s decision on the military budget and the need to tell the truth when questioned by Congress.²²⁶ As John G. Roos wrote, “General Ronald R. Fogleman isn’t a tragic figure. But if the Pentagon’s civilian leaders, and the United States lawmakers, don’t give its many precipitating causes the attention they so sorely deserve, his departure will be tragic.”²²⁷ Using this on-going battle between the service chiefs and the administration over the military budget as an example, drawing attention to these precipitating issues remains difficult for the service chiefs.

Part of the problem in drawing attention to the issues surrounding General Fogleman’s departure is the lingering confusion regarding the issues themselves. General Fogleman is a major contributor to this confusion through his resistance to calls for him to “speak out” about these precipitating causes. It is unclear why General Fogleman did not speak out, although for General Fogleman, this was a personal decision based both on what he believed was right for the Air Force and, more importantly, what he believed was consistent with his moral compass. It appears that General Fogleman’s vision of the military professional was consistent with that of General Omar Bradley who concluded that it was the duty of the military professional to speak out, but only to the “constituted authorities” not the public as a whole.²²⁸ General Bradley felt that to speak out would simply profess that his “judgement was better than the President of the United States or the administration,” something General Bradley could only profess regarding military advice, not policy decisions.²²⁹

Summary

For General Fogleman, avoiding “scapegoating” while establishing accountability for the bombing of Khobar Towers was an important issue to preserve the morale of the armed services and the loyalty owed to military commanders by senior leadership. The importance of this issue drove his initial decision to dissent. His vision of the role of a service chief in government allowed him to seek congressional support for a decision favorable to the Air Force’s position but at odds with the position of the Secretary of Defense. As a result of these public statements, the relationship between General Fogleman and the Secretary of Defense deteriorated to the point where General Fogleman felt Secretary Cohen was no longer able to base a decision on assigning accountability for the bombing of Khobar towers on the facts. Further, General Fogleman could not remain aligned with his internal moral compass if called upon to enforce a decision by Secretary Cohen that he personally felt was wrong. Therefore, recognizing he was no longer an effective chief for the Air Force, General Fogleman asked to be allowed to retire, timing his request to provide Secretary Cohen one last chance to base his decision on accountability for the bombing of Khobar Towers on the facts, rather than the personal conflict that developed between Secretary Cohen and himself.

Notes

¹⁸² Ronald R. Fogleman, transcript of telephone interview with the author, 18 March, 1999, 13, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell AFB AL. Hereafter: Fogleman interview.

¹⁸³ Message, 282200Z OCT 94, USAF CSAF to the United States Air Force, 28 October, 1994. (Maxwell AFB AL: USAF Historical Division, Air University)

¹⁸⁴ Fogleman interview, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁸⁶ Jon R. Anderson, “When is a Mistake a Crime?” *Air Force Times*, 17 October 1994, 16.

¹⁸⁷ Fogleman interview, 11.

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¹⁸⁸ Senate, *Bomb Attack in Saudi Arabia: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services*, 104th Cong., 2nd sess., 1996, 89.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁹⁰ James F. Record, "Independent review of the Khobar Towers Bombing," 31 October, 1996.

¹⁹¹ James F. Record, "Independent Review of the Khobar Towers Bombing, Part B. Accountability Review," 31 October, 1996.

¹⁹² Senate, *Bomb Attack in Saudi Arabia: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services*, 104th Cong., 2nd sess., 1996, 89.

¹⁹³ Eric Schmitt, "Air Force says General Was Not Negligent in Saudi Bombing," *New York Times*, 14 April 1997, 3.

¹⁹⁴ George C. Wilson, "Clinton's Team Shy on Military Expertise," *Air Force Times*, 25 August 1997, 18.

¹⁹⁵ Fogleman Interview, 10.

¹⁹⁶ Senate, *Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1998 and the Future Years Defense Program: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services*, 105th Cong., 1st sess., February 25, 1997, 210.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 211.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid,

¹⁹⁹ Editorial, "Secretary Cohen's Call" *New York Times*, 15 April 1997, 32.

²⁰⁰ Bryan Bender and Tom Breen, "Secretary Cohen says He Will trim F-22 Program if Costs Increase," *Defense Daily*, 4 April 1997, 25.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² William S. Cohen, Quadrennial Defense Review.

²⁰³ Elaine Grossman, "Pentagon Drop Assertion that QDR had Full Service Participation," *Inside the Pentagon*, 22 May 1997, 1.

²⁰⁴ Fogleman Interview, 11

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Quoted in Elaine M. Grossman, "Pentagon Drops Assertion that QDR Had Full Service Participation," *Inside the Pentagon*, 22 May 1997, 1.

²⁰⁷ Fogleman Interview 5.

²⁰⁸ Tony Capaccio, "Pilot Errors," *American Journalism Review* 19, no. 7 (October 1997): 18-27.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.,

²¹⁰ Fogleman Interview, 8

²¹¹ Fogleman Interview, 12.

²¹² Senate, *Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1998 and the Future Years Defense Program: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services*, 105th Cong., 1st sess., 21 May 1997, 676.

²¹³ Ronald R. Fogleman, "A Question of Trust, Not Sex," *Newsweek* 130, no. 21 (24 November, 1997): 60.

²¹⁴ *Washington Times*, May 29, 1997, 4

²¹⁵ Fogleman interview.2

²¹⁶ Ibid, 1

²¹⁷ Ibid, 4

Notes

²¹⁸ Ibid, 3.

²¹⁹ William S. Secretary Cohen, "Personal Accountability for force Protection at Khobar Towers," July 31, 1997.3.

²²⁰ This challenge was only an implicit one, not a direct challenge to Secretary Cohen. General Fogleman maintains that he was not trying to directly challenge Secretary Cohen.

²²¹ Fogleman interview, 11.

²²² Fogleman Interview, 2.

²²³ Fogleman Interview, 2.

²²⁴ Don M. Snider and Michael P. Peters, "A Military Too Politicized," *Armed Forces Journal International* 131, no. 2 (September 1996): 73.

²²⁵ Thomas E. Ricks, "Joint Chiefs Tell Senate Military Faces Readiness Crisis, Needs Bigger Budget," *Wall Street Journal*, 30 September 1998, 6.

²²⁶ Harry G. Summers Jr., "Chiefs are Caught in the Middle," *Air Force Times*, 2 November 1998, 54.

²²⁷ John G. Roos, "Fogleman's departure: He's No Tragic Figure," *Armed Forces Journal International* September 1997, 2

²²⁸ Senate, *Military Situation in the Far east: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 21 May 1951, 752-753.

²²⁹ Ibid.

Chapter 6

Synthesis and Conclusions

If we [military advisors] are not carrying the day in all the arguments, it is more likely that our cause may not always be right or that our persuasiveness may not always be effective, rather than that there is a deliberate desire to disregard the military facts of national life.²³⁰

—Maxwell D. Taylor

The foregoing case studies provide a sampling of thought on how three military professionals handled the dilemma created by their need to challenge the policy decisions of civilian leadership. By comparing the criteria each service chief used to choose or reject each of the three possible options to offer dissent, it should be possible to arrive at the objective of this study: guidelines that will be useful both to future senior military professionals faced with similar challenges and to other officers trying to understand the actions of their senior military leadership.

One of the most significant findings of this study is that none of the cases examined met with any real success at influencing the policy decisions of the civilian leadership. While dissent was offered in each case, no service chief brought about any substantial change to the policy decision in question. Perhaps, General Ridgway had some long-term effect on replacing massive retaliation with flexible response; but, otherwise, the service chiefs offered their dissent and watched the civilian leadership parry their challenges. In fact, using the cases examined for this study, it would be easy to conclude

that dissent by a service chief is not a means to influence policy decisions at all, as none of the three options examined produced a result favorable to any service chief.

This, however, would be a shortsighted conclusion based on the evidence in the three cases which demonstrates that service chiefs were frustrated by situations where their advice conflicts with the policy decisions and wrestled with the tension these situations created. To offer the solution of doing nothing does little to ease the constant pull from the institutional loyalty that demands that service chief do something. Therefore, this synthesis is focused on correlating factors considered by each service chief in making his decision to dissent, using the three options identified.

Before reviewing each option, it is important to note that each service chief examined was dissenting against a different caliber of decision. General Ridgway was really arguing for a new national security strategy and, consequently, was challenging the basic validity of the New Look. General Ridgway felt that the New Look was fundamentally flawed and wanted to stop its implementation before it became the only possible security strategy for the nation. In contrast, General Johnson accepted the decision to get involved in Vietnam as essential to maintaining the nation's security, but objected to the means that President Johnson used to get the country involved. Despite this objection, General Johnson still maintained his confidence in the overall decision to intervene in Vietnam. Therefore, General Johnson ultimately acquiesced in President Johnson's decision to build the Army up without using the reserve forces. General Fogleman challenged Secretary Cohen's pending decision on a specific issue regarding the administration of discipline in the Air Force. This issue was far removed from the national security strategy or the national military strategy. Nevertheless, for General

Fogleman, the consequences of Secretary Cohen making the wrong decision would be prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the Air Force. Because he was unwilling to implement a decision on this issue that was fundamentally opposed to his advice, General Fogleman requested early retirement.

Option one: Dissent within the Executive Branch

In making their decisions to dissent, the first consideration of every service chief examined was the importance they placed on the issue at hand. Each service chief felt that the issue involved had great significance both for the individual service he led and for the overall national security of the United States.

General Johnson was the only chief who limited himself to an internal dissent to challenge the policy decisions of the civilian leadership. Even with a non-functional National Security Council (NSC), General Johnson maintained confidence in General Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), to carry his dissent to the decision-makers in the executive branch. It appears that General Johnson remained content with this situation, never asking for a direct conference with the President. When it was clear to General Johnson that his argument for mobilization did not prevail, he appeared to accept the decision as final. Although he had significant reservations concerning the wisdom of President Johnson's decision not to mobilize military reserves for the Vietnam war, General Johnson was satisfied with presenting his argument, not necessarily winning his argument.

For Generals Ridgway and Fogleman, internal dissent was simply a precursor to other avenues of dissent. When their dissent did not have the desired effect on the policy decision, they each turned to an alternative means. Therefore, by evaluating the effect

that their dissent had on the policy decision in question, Generals Ridgway and Fogleman established an additional criterion in their individual decision making processes.

General Ridgway's initial intention was to debate the merits of the New Look inside the organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). General Ridgway signed the initial *Sequoia* document thinking that the New Look was simply a concept for further study. Instead, Admiral Radford used the *Sequoia* document as a means to display unanimous approval by the JCS for the New Look, holding the Army to force structure numbers it contained. Thus, the debate internal to the Defense Department, that Ridgway had planned to use to challenge the New Look never materialized. When Ridgway recognized that this debate would not happen during Admiral Radford's tour as Chairman, he turned toward the American public.

General Fogleman apparently rejected stopping with internal dissent alone for similar reasons. Without the backing from the other service chiefs and most importantly, General Shallikashvili, the Chairman, it was difficult for General Fogleman to gain Secretary Cohen's support for either the F-22 or the Record Report. General Fogleman's argument that punishing Schwalier would send the wrong message to the other commanders in the armed services did not carry the weight it could have if General Shallikashvili had supported it. Furthermore, it appears that none of the other service chiefs were willing to support General Fogleman's position and argue against the Downing Report. Without the support of any other member of the JCS, General Fogleman's internal dissent had minimal chance of success with Secretary Cohen. Since General Fogleman was unwilling to accept a decision to punish Schwalier, he turned to Congress.

Therefore, for the service chief, internal dissent is somewhat dependent on the support of the Chairman. If the service chief and the Chairman are on opposite sides of an issue, internal dissent becomes subordinate to the opinions of the Chairman. This “subordination” of the service chief’s opinion has been accentuated by the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. This Act frees the Chairman from representing the corporate opinion of the JCS. Instead, the Chairman is allowed to formulate his own advice, perhaps in contradiction to a service chief’s advice. Arguably, since 1986, the service chiefs are now dependent on gaining the Chairman’s support if internal dissent is to have a chance at influencing policy decisions. General Fogleman provides evidence to support this position by pointing out that the politicians in Washington are confused and “not exactly sure how to handle disparate positions” between the service chiefs.²³¹ He goes on to say that the “chiefs understand this and they try to work to achieve some degree of consensus...there is nothing written on this subject...it is something that you learn.”²³² Even prior to Goldwater-Nichols, General Johnson pointed out that consensus was a means to “avoid exposure to the concept of divide and conquer.”²³³ If the JCS could present a unanimous position, their advice had the best chance of being heard. General Johnson accepted consensus building as means to protect the corporate JCS from being divided by attacks from the civilian staff of the Defense Department who attempted to take advantage of differences in opinion between the service chiefs to forward their own positions. Thus, attempting to forward a position that differs from that of the Chairman is a difficult task for the service chief, as there appears to be some pressure to arrive at a consensus opinion within the JCS; and any consensus opinion must have the support of the Chairman.

However, support of the Chairman is no guarantee for success. The service chief must also establish some measure of success to see if military advice is being heard. General Ridgway was able to observe, first hand, the stifling of his advice at the JCS and NSC meetings. General Johnson remained removed from the decision-makers and never really knew what advice General Wheeler gave to President Johnson and of that, what advice was rejected by President Johnson. Therefore, General Johnson never knew how hard to push his internal dissent with Wheeler and, more importantly, how to refine his argument to meet the concerns of the President. Although General Johnson could easily assess his internal dissent as a failure, without access to the decision-makers and the decision making process, he never had the opportunity to know all the issues involved with the decision not to mobilize. Without knowledge of these issues, it was difficult for General Johnson either to refine his argument, or like Generals Ridgway and Fogleman, to make a decision to move on from his internal dissent to another option.

Option two: Public Dissent

Both Generals Ridgway and Fogleman chose to express a public challenge to the policy decisions in question based on two criteria. First, in their minds, the significance of the issues involved demanded that they continue to challenge the policy decisions outside of the executive branch. Second, their individual military ethos allowed them to voice a public challenge to policy decisions while serving as a service chief.

For General Ridgway, public dissent was consistent with his vision of the role of the military professional that allowed the service chief to speak publicly regarding issues of national security. With Congress, Ridgway's vision of the military professional demanded a more guarded approach, avoiding any direct challenges to the specific

decisions already made by President Eisenhower. Instead, he offered his advice concerning the effect that President Eisenhower's decisions had on the Army and on the security of the country. The problem General Ridgway discovered was that politicians used his testimony to support their own agendas against President Eisenhower. While General Ridgway was not directly attacking President Eisenhower's decisions, his public statements regarding the inability of the Army to meet the national security needs of the country were quickly turned into ammunition for political attacks against President Eisenhower. General Ridgway blames this fact on the civilian leadership and their willingness to allow his military advice to be drawn into partisan politics.

General Fogleman's approach to conducting his public dissent was similar to General Ridgway's in that he hoped to leverage public support to influence the decisions of the civilian leadership in the executive branch. Unlike General Ridgway, however, the nature of the issues at hand forced General Fogleman to turn directly to Congress to seek the support he needed to influence Secretary Cohen's decision. Because General Fogleman could not depend on Secretary Widnall to develop a Congressional constituency herself to support the Record Report, General Fogleman attempted to develop one on his own. Therefore, General Fogleman was very frank during Congressional testimony, clearly stating his position on establishing accountability for the Khobar Towers bombing. Since this testimony came out before Secretary Cohen released a decision, the consequence was that the media portrayed General Fogleman's remarks as a direct challenge to Secretary Cohen's authority to make a final decision establishing accountability for Khobar Towers. In a sense, General Fogleman met the same fate as General Ridgway, watching his testimony be used by those on either side of

the issue to support their particular cause. Both Generals Ridgway and Fogleman learned what former Secretary of the Air Force Harold Brown has described best by saying, “In short, when an officer has something to say he must weigh the possibility that his free speech may become someone else’s garbled speech.”²³⁴

Fundamental to the voicing public dissent was the individual service chief’s vision of the military professional. This vision determines the range of public involvement acceptable to each individual while serving as chief. How a military officer defines the role of the military professional in the public arena is ultimately a personal choice. General Fogleman and General Ridgway were comfortable expressing some level of public challenge to policy decisions, while General Johnson, adhering to a more “traditional role,” rejected this method as an acceptable means to express dissent while serving as chief. Obviously, there is no “right answer” to determine the proper role of the service chief in the public arena. Therefore, how each individual defined his role in the public arena was highly dependent on the individual’s military ethos and previous military experience. General Ridgway developed a highly sophisticated vision of the role of the military advisor in government that he used as an absolute measure to guide his conduct as a service chief. General Fogleman recognized the need to develop a congressional constituency for the Air Force’s position and was willing to overcome the personal shortfalls of Secretary Widnall and develop this constituency, while serving as the chief. General Johnson could not justify a public challenge to the Commander-in-Chief while remaining in uniform.

While debating policy in the public arena, both Generals Ridgway and Fogleman could not remain clear of partisan politics while speaking out in public against policy

decisions. Both Ridgway and Fogleman witnessed a deterioration of their credibility within the executive branch as their purely military advice was viewed as political attacks on the administration's position. This decay was a result of two factors. The first was the lack of support from the individual service secretary to defend or support the position of the service chief. The second was the willingness of civilian politicians to use military advice to support partisan positions. Therefore, it appears that the success of a public dissent by a service chief depended on both the willingness of the service secretary to defend the service chief in the public arena and the willingness of the civilian leadership to avoid the temptation to use this dissent for political posturing. These two factors remained outside of the control of the service chief and made public dissent a risky venture.

Finally, even with some protection from partisan politics there is simply no guarantee that the service chief will ever have the public popularity to influence a policy decision by appealing to the American public. General Ridgway was a well-known hero from the Korean War, but could not develop sufficient public support to overcome an even more popular war hero, President Eisenhower. In contrast, General Fogleman was, at best, an obscure military leader, unknown to the American public until his exposure during the Flinn case. This negative exposure hurt any chance of General Fogleman gaining public support to challenge Secretary Cohen's decision just weeks later. It is difficult to envision a situation where a service chief could gain significant public support to reverse a policy decision using the public arena alone unless the service chief is aided by powerful political allies who share the same objectives.

Option three: Resignation or Retirement

General Ridgway rejected resignation as an option to challenge a policy decision unless the policy was morally bankrupt. General Johnson struggled with the decision to resign, continually being pulled away from resignation by his loyalty to the Army, believing he could do more in the Army than outside the Army. General Fogleman based his decision to seek early retirement on two critical factors. First, he recognized that his usefulness as a military advisor had significantly diminished. Second, he could not remain true to his internal moral compass if he presided over a decision with which he fundamentally disagreed.

Based on the cases examined in this study it is difficult to conclude that resignation offered any of the three service chiefs a significant opportunity to influence the policy decisions in question. Certainly, Ridgway did not need resignation to propel him in to the public spotlight to challenge the New Look. Even after his retirement, General Ridgway maintained a significant place in the public spotlight and aggressively challenged the New Look. Yet General Ridgway was unable to challenge the popularity of President Eisenhower or alter his defense policies. For General Johnson, resignation may have offered him the opportunity to expose the effects that President Johnson's decision not to mobilize were having on the Army, but it is difficult to say that anyone was really interested. In 1965, Congress seemed content with supporting the President's policies and the majority of the public supported some kind of American involvement in Vietnam. For General Fogleman, the immediate results are clear, leaving the office of Chief of Staff did little to influence Secretary Cohen's decision process. While General Fogleman's retirement did prevent the Air Force from suffering the effects of an impotent

service chief, it apparently did little to do little to influence the Clinton administration's propensity to make policy decisions inconsistent with military advice. While it is simply too soon to assess the long-term effects of his retirement on future service chiefs, the initial message seems to discredit resignation as a means to influence policy decisions.

Part of the problem of surrounding resignation or early retirement as a means to change policy decisions is that it is shadowed by a mystique that is unsupported by tradition.²³⁵ While it is commonly thought that the resignation of a service chief would ignite public interest regarding the circumstances surrounding the service chief's departure, General Fogleman's case demonstrates something quite different. The public remained largely uninterested to the circumstances surrounding his departure and unwilling to call for investigations to determine the "precipitating causes." It seems any public reaction was entirely dependent on General Fogleman speaking out immediately after his retirement. When this did not occur, whatever chance to influence future policy decisions was lost. As General Fogleman had already aired his public opposition to Secretary Cohen's decision, it appears little would have been gained by repeating the same argument after he had already lost. The value in General Fogleman's retirement is found both in that it allowed the Air Force to replace an impotent service chief, and it provided General Fogleman with the personal satisfaction gained by maintaining his personal integrity.

As the first service chief to ask for early retirement when faced with an unsupportable policy decision, General Fogleman had little tradition to use as a foundation on which to base his course of action. Without this tradition neither the American public nor the Congress recognized the significance of General Fogleman's

action. With General Fogleman's virtual withdrawal from the public eye after his retirement, little was known about the circumstances surrounding his situation and there was little incentive to find out. Therefore, resignation should not be viewed as a guarantee to propel the issues surrounding a service chief's departure into the public spotlight, creating an immediate public cry for reform. In fact, it is difficult to conclude that the resignation of a service chief would really do anything, unless there was substantial public interest surrounding the issue. If this public interest existed, it is easy to conclude that the service chief would be afforded the opportunity to speak out, as a minimum in front of Congress, without the need to leave the armed services. General George S. Brown, a former Chairman of the JCS agrees stating, "If a situation direly threatened the national security interest, a chief would not have to resign because he would surely find a voice in the Congress."²³⁶ Simply put, without a "tradition" of resignation by the service chief the public does not know how to react to the event. To be useful as a means to influence policy decisions the military professional must establish this tradition by educating the public regarding the significance of this action. Without this tradition, it seems useless as a means to influence policy decisions. While it is easy to call for the resignation of a service chief to change "bad" policy decisions, in reality, it is hard to justify as a viable course of action to actually change policy decisions.

Conclusions

The evidence uncovered in these case studies does not lend itself to the articulation of perfectly clear guidelines for use by senior military professionals facing the decision to challenge national policy. Nevertheless, this study did expose several key factors for the

senior military professional to consider when evaluating the options available to voice disagreement with policy decisions.

First, and most important, must be the significance of the issue at hand. The military professional must be able to “clearly sort out in his own mind the important from the very important.”²³⁷ All three generals examined believed the issues involved were significant to both the organization and the national security. This determination clearly drove their individual decisions to express dissent. Both Generals Ridgway and Fogleman considered the perceived effects of the policy decision as unacceptable and would not stop their dissent until the policy was changed. General Johnson believed that President Johnson’s non-mobilization decision was significantly critical to national defense to argue against it pointedly in the private councils of government.

The second factor is the personal perception of the role of the military professional in the public arena. Clearly General Ridgway’s vision of the role of the military professional in the public arena differed from General Johnson’s. Neither vision was necessarily incorrect. However, the vision they held drove them to different courses regarding public dissent. Again, this remains an individual choice and is based on the military ethos that the individual officer develops through experience.

The third consideration is the nature of several key relationships in the executive branch, including the service secretary and the Chairman of the JCS. Determining the significance of the issue is a personal decision that might not be consistent with the views of other military professionals. General Shalikashvili did not place the same importance on the issues that General Fogleman was challenging, however General Fogleman did not subordinate his feelings regarding what he believed to be a severe issue based on this

difference of opinion. Since the passage of Goldwater-Nichols, it appears that the Chairman can severely hamper any internal dissent simply by taking an opposite opinion from the service chief. As the principal advisor to the President, the Chairman can formulate his advice independent from a dissenting service chief and not mention this dissenting opinion to the President. When Admiral Radford disagreed with General Ridgway's position on supporting the French in Vietnam, he still remained obligated to inform the Secretary of Defense of Ridgway's opposing view; and in this case, ultimately, Ridgway's position prevailed. Had Radford been allowed to formulate his own advice as General Shalikashvili, Ridgway might not have been so influential in keeping the Army out of Vietnam. Therefore, the Chairman's position appears to be important to the success of any internal dissent.

While the service secretary has no role in policy development, all three officers examined were dependent on the service secretary to help articulate the service interests, shielding the service chief from partisan politics. Only Army Secretary Stevens was able to keep Ridgway out of partisan politics during the early period of Ridgway's public dissent. Ridgway depended on Secretary Stevens to stand up for the Army against the policy decisions generated by the New Look. As long as Secretary Stevens was willing to speak out against the force structure cuts in the Army generated by the New Look, Ridgway could continue to state the effects of the policy decisions on the Army without fear of political attack. When Ridgway lost Stevens' support, his lone dissenting opinions were attractive targets for partisan attacks. General Fogleman felt that Secretary Widnall's inability to develop a congressional constituency forced him to develop one for the Air Force, exposing him to partisan politics.

Finally, how the individual service chief defines service loyalty is critical in determining a course of action to offer dissent. Again, this remains the personal choice of the individual officer. General Fogleman based a portion of his decision to seek early retirement on the loyalty he felt for the Air Force and the desire to insure the Air Force had an effective chief. General Johnson used this same loyalty to rationalize his decision not to resign.

As the foregoing cases demonstrate, each situation is based on not only the context of the time, but also on the experience and values of the participants involved. In the end, how these senior military officer chose to express their dissent was most significantly dependent on how each viewed the role of the military professional in the society. This must remain a personal evaluation that can only be aided by a better understanding of those who have served in the past. In this spirit, the cases of General Ridgway, General Johnson, and General Fogleman serve as useful examples to aid this understanding.

Notes

²³⁰ Maxwell D. Taylor, "Military Advice," an address to the Fellows of the American Bar Foundation, Chicago IL, 15 February 1964. In *Vital Speeches of the Day* 30, no. 11 (15 March 1964): 336.

²³¹ Fogleman interview, 3.

²³² Fogleman interview, 8

²³³ Gray Oral History, 11.

²³⁴ Quoted in *The Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in National Policy: A Round Table held on August 2, 1978* (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978), 42.

²³⁵ What follows is based on a conversation with Dr Richard H. Kohn, 22 April 1999.

²³⁶ Quoted in *The Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in National Policy: A Round Table held on August 2, 1978* (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978), 42.

²³⁷ Edward B. Atkeson, "When Duty Demands: Resigning in Protest" *Army* 42, no. 12 (December 1992): 26.

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